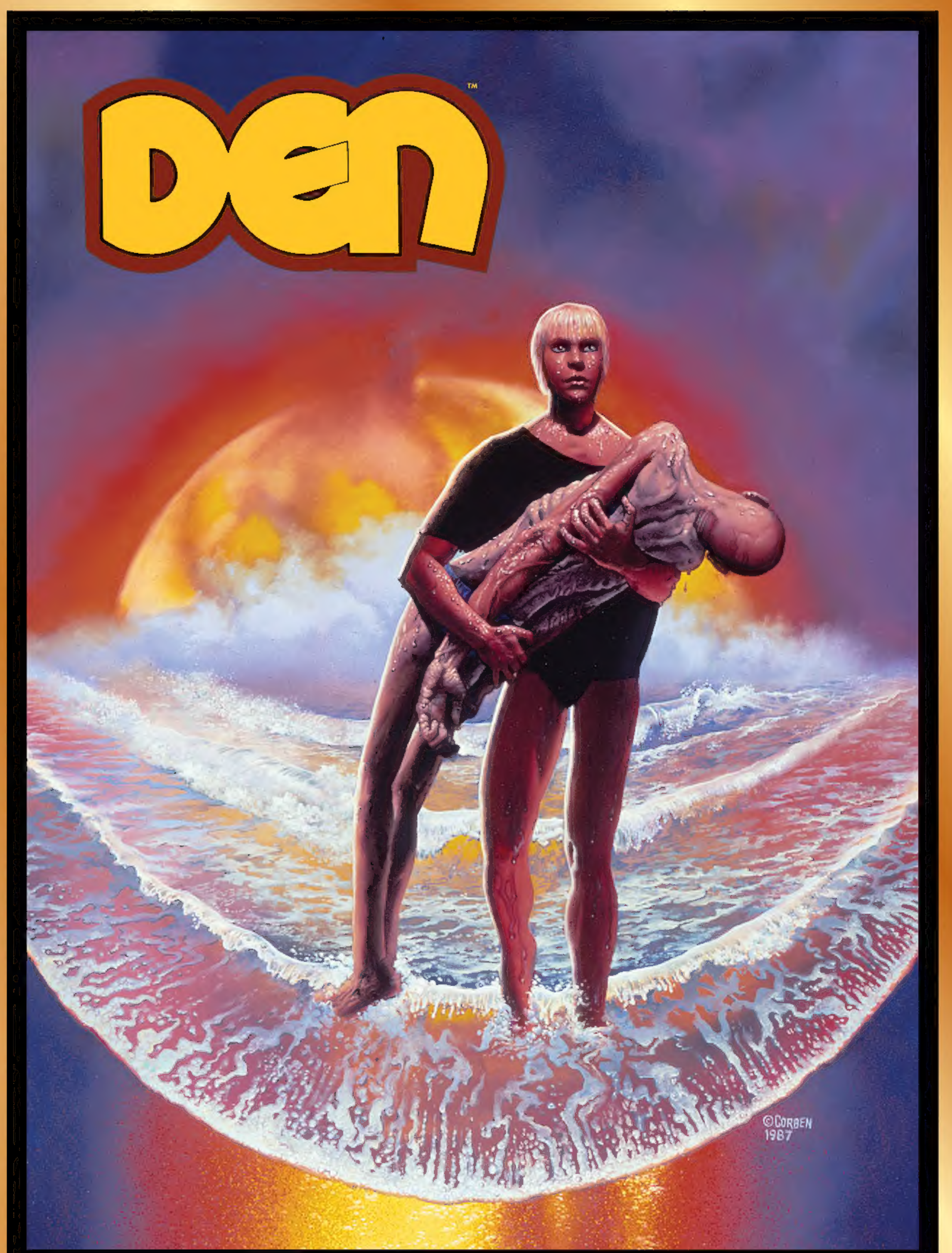

RICHARD CORBEN

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1987

RICHARD CORBEN

Cover of *Children of Fire* #3, 1988

RED™

VOLUME 3

CHILDREN OF FIRE

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DEN VOLUME 3: CHILDREN OF FIRE

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INTRODUCTION

MATT KINDT

1995. I graduated from art school and graduated with a degree in art with an "emphasis in graphic design." I'd just learned how to use photoshop and got my first job designing packaging for home goods. Excited to show off my technical skills, I soon realized the office I worked in was printing everything in Hong Kong and all of the design and art had to be prepared traditionally—not with electronic files, but paste-up: acetate and color separations created by hand. This is a painstaking process. One that requires precise hand skills and technical knowledge . . . Knowledge I hadn't learned because schools had moved on. I was taught Photoshop. The computer now does all of the hard stuff. But not at my first job. So I had to learn the old traditional way if I wanted to keep that job. So I did . . . but I remember saying at the time . . . if I had known, I'd have to go back to these old ways of production, I never would have gotten into it.

PRESENT. Why do I bring this up? Well, that process—the old way of printing and making color separations—has always given comic books a certain look. A kind of crude color printing that I still love. I like seeing the "dots" in the color. I like seeing the process on the page.

1983. I was spending the night at a friend's house and he had a stack of comics and a few issues of *Heavy Metal*. It was stuff I wasn't allowed to buy at the time. Our household was being purged of rock 'n' roll at the time. I have a very vivid memory of my brother fighting for his right to keep Police's *Synchronicity* album from the trash can (a fight he lost).

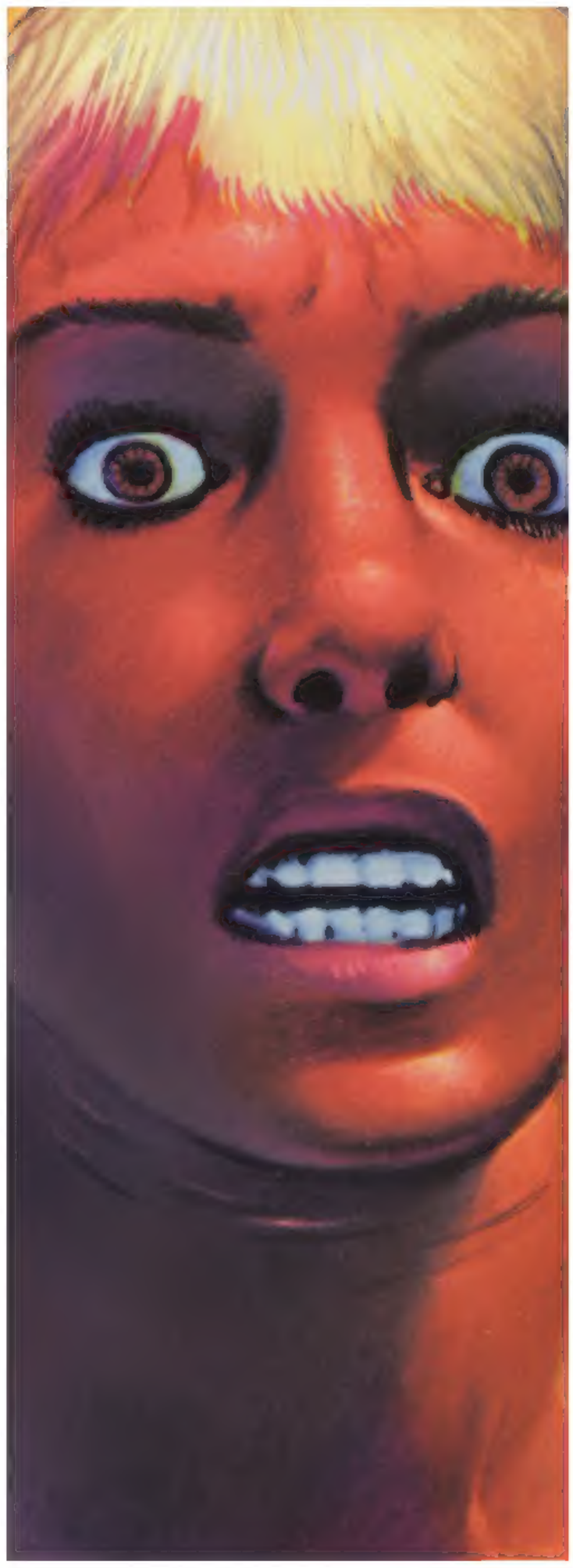
Meanwhile, I'm flipping through this issue of *Heavy Metal*. I'm seeing Moebius for the first time and being struck by the pale pastel color palette. And I'm seeing Richard Corben. There are very few artists I remember seeing for the first time. I'm ten or eleven at the time, so I'm more concerned with the character and barely paying attention to the names creating the stories . . . until I see Moebius and Corben back-to-back. It's the first time I see comics where . . . I didn't care who the characters are or what the story is. I needed to read this. It was art with a capital A.

One of the great appeals of comic books is that you can see how the art is made. I can see the lines that are being put down on paper. If I can just find the right brush or pen, I too can make those marks. I think that's why, early on, I loved the Corben art, but I never thought about it. It was like it burned a blind spot into my art-

seeing eyes. Because I couldn't make sense of it. I had no idea where to start if I was going to replicate it. I couldn't learn to draw like this because I couldn't see how it was done.

YESTERDAY. I had to write an introduction for this amazing book. I still didn't know how he achieved what he's done here. The color. The tones. It's beyond human knowledge. I did a deep dive—researched all I could regarding his process. And the answer is not good. There is a reason no one has been able to replicate what Corben did. He had amazing rendering talent. But he also had an absolute comprehension of the four-color printing process.

With a combination of air-brush, cameras, and acetate overlays, Corben created magic. I won't bore you with the technical process here—but if you read about his process online, you'll realize he is a singular talent in the industry. No one was doing what he was doing. No one today is doing it how he was able to do it. He didn't have a computer to simulate the colors so he could hit some buttons and play with variations. Corben had a savant's knowledge of how color could work—how the cyan, magenta, yellow, and black four-color process could be manipulated—and it was all in his head. This is something you can't just look at and replicate. For a kid growing up, trying to learn from comics how to make comics, Corben's work is humbling. It's work that says *maybe you should do something else for a living*. The only thing I can hold onto, even to this day, is looking at Corben's panel borders and sound effects. Those I can understand. Look at the corners. At some of the edges. You can see that they were drawn with a technical pen. On paper. There's a roughness and a slight imperfection to them. But left there on purpose so you would know that yes, these images were created by human hands.



TODAY. When we look at these pages, we're getting a true vision of what was in Corben's head. His unique color choices and process. His story. His beautifully distorted characters and ideas and action. This book and Corben's writing/drawing truly embody everything that makes comic books the best visual medium on Earth. This is a pure vision, originally self-published, from a singular artist following his vision without compromise.

Corben describes the world of "Dremurth" in a way that also describes his own work perfectly.

"Where the bizarre is normal and the commonplace is slightly weird."

I couldn't have said it better.

Matt Kindt

PART ONE

CHILDREN OF FIRE

ON A WARM AND QUIET SUMMER EVENING, THE SUN MOVED EVER SO SLOWLY TOWARD THE WAITING HORIZON, LIKE TWO LOVERS SAVORING THE ANTICIPATION BEFORE AN EMBRACE.

THEY TOUCHED AND THE SKY GLOWED. THE WAVES UNDULATED THE BROAD SURFACE OF THE WESTERN SEA. FAR FROM ANY KNOWN LAND.

THIS WAS DREMURTH. A WORLD OF ALTERNATE REALITY. WHERE THE BIZARRE WAS NORMAL AND THE COMMONPLACE WAS SLIGHTLY WEIRD. HERE, STRANGE CREATURES SWAM, CRAWLED, WALKED, AND FLEW.

TWO NEWHALES FROLICKED IN THE SURF. EARLIER THEIR HUNTING HAD BEEN GOOD, AND NOW THEY PLAYED, BREACHING INTO THE AIR FOR SPORT.

THE FEMALE PAUSED AND NOTICED A GLOWING LIGHT ABOVE, LARGER THAN A STAR. AS IT MOVED ACROSS THE HEAVENS, IT PULSED LIKE A SCHOOL OF TINY FISH WITH SUNLIGHT REFLECTIONS FLICKERING ON THEIR SHINY METALLIC BODIES.

AS IT CONTINUED, THE WHALES BECAME BORED WITH THE TEMPORARY ENTERTAINMENT, AND THEY RESUMED THEIR MUTUAL CHASE. FARTHER ON, ANOTHER GAZE NOTICED THE SPARKLE.

AH, SEE THE FIRE. IT BURNS INTO MY MIND AND POSSESSES ME. SUCH BEAUTY IS WORTH ALL MY EFFORTS TO HAVE IT AND TO PROTECT IT AND TO KEEP IT FROM ALL WHO WOULD TAKE IT FROM ME.

I SEE A PULSING, MASTER!

A PULSING? SENSELESS FOOL, ***ZOMUK!*** IT SHINES WITH AN EVERLASTING CONSTANCY. WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "A PULSING"?

THERE, IN THE SKY, LORD ZEG.

WHAT? WHERE?

IT BURNS BRIGHTER AS IT DESCENDS. ***AH!*** IT'S COMING APART!

AT THAT SAME MOMENT, ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE TINY ISLAND...

THIS SHOULDN'T TAKE LONG. YOU CAN GATHER SOME OF THAT CABBAGE LICHEN AND I'LL CHECK UP HIGHER FOR FRESHWATER POOLS. THAT MIST NEAR THE CREST MIGHT BE FROM WARM WATER.

I HOPE YOUR MAP IS RIGHT, VAC. WE SHOULD FIND THE HERMIT'S OUTPOST BY NEXT WEEK. BUT THESE WATERS CAN BE TRICKY.

YEP! WE'VE PUT OURSELVES THROUGH A LOT FOR THIS. SNUFFING OL' CAPTAIN SQUID FOR HIS MAP, TAKING HIS SEACRAFT, THE MONTHS OF BAD WEATHER, JUST TO REACH THIS AREA. BUT IT'LL BE WORTH IT.

AND ALL THAT TIME WITHOUT A WOMAN...BUT YES. THE FABLED STONE SHOULD BE WORTH IT. IT HAD BETTER BE VERY SOON. I CAN HARDLY WAIT.

HEY! LOOK AT THAT!

EH?

WHAT A SHOW!

JOCHRE! IT'S COMING RIGHT AT US!

NO! WHAT'LL WE DO?

RUN!

WHERE?

WHAM

SSKRROOOUUGH!

GREAT ULUHTC! WOULD YOU LOOK AT THAT!

MASTER! PART OF IT FELL ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ISLAND.

HURRY! I MUST SEE THIS WONDROUS EVENT.

A FIRE! WILL IT SPREAD TO YOUR TOWER, LORD?

DON'T BE STUPID. WHAT'S THAT?

IT'S...IT'S ...NO! PIRATES!

CALAMITY! THEY'VE COME FOR MY TREASURE!

HURRY!

EH?

SNIFF!

SPLORTCH

YUM!

ALIEN EGG PODS FLOATED AND BOBBED HELPLESSLY IN THIS STRANGE NEW ENVIRONMENT. ONE OF THE NEWHALES NUDGED A POD CURIOUSLY.

NEARBY, SHARKS ALSO BECAME INTERESTED. THEY DISCOVERED THESE NEAT LITTLE BITE-SIZED PACKAGES WERE DELICIOUS.

AND THERE WAS MORE PULVERIZED TISSUE THAT WAS BUT RECENTLY ALIVE. GORE WAFTED IN THE CURRENT.

SOME WERE STILL ALIVE. BUT NOT FOR LONG.

SOON, A FEEDING FRENZY WAS UNDERWAY.

BUMMP

HEY, VAC! GET A LOAD OF THIS!

WHERE'D YOU GO?

...OH.

OKAY. NEVER MIND. YOU'LL JUST MISS OUT ON ANOTHER SHOW.

A MERMAID? NO, IT'S THE BIRTH OF VENUS...A GODDESS EMERGES FROM THE SEA.

WAIT...OR IS IT WATERLOGGED NEPTUNE, BEARING A DROWNED SAILOR BACK FROM THE DEEP?

FURE AM, MAL.

EERK! COUGH! COUGH!

IT'S A DRENCHED GIFT FROM THE WATERS. AND LORDY, IT'S A BIG ONE!

W- WIIX...

O SENSE XUNVEK.

COME UP ON THE DRY SAND, DEARY.

XI CIAKSEQW U WUGIK, XAXE. QEUGE AS UQINE!

YOU TALK FUNNY, BUT I'M NOT INTERESTED IN CONVERSATION.

NICE FACE.

CIA'KE PURONV U ZOV POSHURE!

LET'S SEE SOME MORE.

THWAP

CRUNCH!

CAN IT BE? OLD ZEG'S HIDEAWAY. THE DISTANCES ON THE MAP MUST HAVE BEEN WRONG.

SPLAT!

*THE SOAKED AND SHIVERING NEWCOMERS DISCUSSED THEIR SITUATION IN A LANGUAGE NEVER BEFORE HEARD ON DREMURTH. ONE CALLED THE OTHER **MAL.***

CIA UKE INE IW HTE FUKKOEKS, U KIL. XOX HTE MKIHILAEEN SAKGOGE? XOX UNC EVVS SAKKGOGE?

MAL...O...O SUF SIPE KAMHAKEX INES. O WEUK PUNC UKE ZEONV EUHEN ZC HTE NUHOGE QOWEWIKPS.

O SENSE SIPE NEUKZC...NIH ON HTE FUHEK.

THEY WERE BOTH TALL BY HUMAN STANDARDS. BUT ONE WAS EXCRUCIATINGLY THIN AND APPARENTLY UNACCUSTOMED TO PHYSICAL LABOR. JOCHRE WAS RIGHT AND WRONG ABOUT THE OTHER. IT WAS A FEMALE--BUT A FEMALE APPARENTLY BRED FOR ATHLETICS. A WARRIOR AND--LIKE THE WARRIORS OF ANTS, BEES, AND TERMITES--A NONSEXUAL FEMALE.

HTEN WE PASH WONX HTEP.

KIL, OH'S NI ASE! ***XUPN HTE QAYR!*** UNX XUPN HTE YKEUHAKES IW HTOS FIKQX!

NI. U SEU WIKP ONHEKGENEX FTEN FE FEKE UHHUYREX ANXEKFUHEK. UNX OH ZIKE AS HI HTE STIKE.

THE PAIR STARTED UP THE HILL WITH AN APPARENT PURPOSE. KIL PAUSED TO WARM HERSELF NEAR THE BURNING FRAGMENT.

FTHU OS HTOS?

FWOOM

CIA WIIQ! OH'S HTE ***MIFEK*** SEYHOIN IW IAK SMUYE STOM! OH'S EPOHHONV ***QEHTUQ KUXOUHOIN!***

VKEUH! FE'QQ EOHTEK XOE IW EDMISAKE, SHUKGUHOIN, IK ***KUXOUHOIN!***

SI PAYT WIK IAK NEF YIQINEC.

IAK YTUNYES TUGE SQOMMEX WKIP ***SQOP*** HI ***NINE!***

SLAP!

FE UKE UQOGE, UNX ANHOQ FE'KE XEUX, FE TUGE U MAKMISE.

SAYT HUQR XESHKICS IAK FOQQ.

TH- KLUMP

KIL FELT WARM FROM THE HEAT OF THE FIRE. SUDDENLY SHE REGRETTED HITTING THE MAL.

O'P SIKKC O SHKAYR CIA, MAL.

HMF!

ZOMUK, ONE OF THE PIRATES IS COMING. HE WANTS MY TREASURE!

I'LL PLAY IT COOL TO START WITH. I'LL JUST TELL HIM I WAS SHIPWRECKED.

BBOOOOONGGG

ZOMUK! ZOMUK! DO SOMETHING!

GET RID OF THEM AND YOU CAN HAVE THE COOK!

THE COOK?

HMM...

...ZOMUK WANT COOK.

HELLO, STRANGER, AND WELCOME. ENTER THE BUCKET AND YOU WILL BE LIFTED ACROSS FOR AN AUDIENCE.

SQUEEK SQUIK SQUEEK SQUIK

WHAT? WAIT A MINUTE.

SNAP

CRASH!

IS THIS ANY WAY TO GREET GUESTS?

MAYBE THERE'S A WAY UP THROUGH HERE.

WH-WHO ARE YOU?

I AM VAC, AN UNFORTUNATE TRAVELER. THE DOORMAN PUT ME IN THE WRONG ENTRANCE.

NO ONE HAS COME THROUGH THIS WAY BEFORE.

I WAS SHIPWRECKED. I NEED SHELTER.

OTHERS HAVE BEEN SHIPWRECKED. THEY'RE STILL OUT THERE WITH YOU.

I AM PUCCA. THEY MAKE ME DO THE COOKING HERE.

DO YOU MEAN IT? COULD YOU REALLY ESCAPE...? AND TAKE ME WITH YOU?

THAT WOULD BE EASY FOR ME, PUCCA. BUT I'M NOT READY TO GO YET.

I WANT SOMETHING... DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR MASTER HIDES HIS TREASURE?

AH, LASS, GETTING OUT IS NOT A PROBLEM FOR ME... IF I HAD A LITTLE HELP.

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

TAKE ME WITH YOU, VAC. THEY KEEP ME AS A SLAVE HERE. SEE, THIS BAR IS LOOSE.

YES, I CAN GET IT. A ***SLAVE,*** EH? THERE'S A GOOD SLAVE MARKET IN KORDOC. THEY PAY WELL.

...SLAVE MARKET?

C'MON! WHAT'S THE MATTER? YOU WANT TO GET OUT OF HERE, DON'T YOU?

NOT TO BE SOLD IN A SLAVE--

YOO-HOO! ARE YOU DOWN THERE?

SHH! SOMEONE'S THERE.

HELLO! I'M SO SORRY ABOUT THIS. THE HOIST DIDN'T WORK RIGHT AND THE ROPE SNAPPED AT A MOST INAPPROPRIATE MOMENT.

I'LL BE BACK SOON. BE READY TO GO...OR ELSE!

LET ME OUT OF HERE! THAT DROP MIGHT HAVE ***KILLED*** ME, YOU ***TOAD!*** I DEMAND TO SEE YOUR MASTER AT ONCE!

RELEASE ME!

I BEG OF YOU, PLEASE DON'T TELL MY MASTER OF THIS BLUNDER.

HE WILL SURELY KILL ME IF YOU DO.

AND WHY SHOULDN'T I?

I CAN MAKE IT WORTH YOUR INDULGENCE, SIR.

MY MASTER HAS MANY TREASURES IN HIS COLLECTION...INCLUDING THE FABULOUS ***NAR STONE.*** I COULD SEE TO IT THAT IT COMES WITHIN YOUR REACH.

YES, SIR. PLEASE FORGIVE THIS TERRIBLE INCONVENIENCE.

OH? WELL, IN THAT CASE.

MAY THE ELDER GODS OF MY ANCESTORS BLESS YOU, SIR. COME, FOLLOW ME NOW. MY MASTER LIES IN A DRUGGED SLEEP.

PLEASE HELP YOURSELF. I DARE NOT TOUCH THEM. MASTER ZEG WOULD HAVE LITTLE TROUBLE TRACING MY SCENT.

HEH HEH HEH!

THE TREASURES ARE KEPT HIDDEN IN A SMALL CHAMBER, HIGH IN THE TOWER.

EH?

WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS?

A TRICK!

GAAUGH!

I'M SORRY, SIR. SO THAT I MAY SAVOR THE TENDER FLESH OF THE COOK...

URK!

BRUK BRUK BRUK BRUK

...YOU MUST DIE!

UNH!

O HTONR HTEKE UKE SEGEKUQ EVVS QEWH. HTEC'KE ON HTOS ZAOQXONV.

HKC HI KESHKUON CIAK PUKHOUQ HENXENYOES. HE PVTH KEHKOEGE HTEP MEUYEWAQQC.

AAAAHH!

AAAAAAAAH!

KBLDK

GRNCH!

SPLASH

KLPTK

O'P HII FEUR HI PURE HTE JAPM.
O SPEQQ WIIX.
O'P TANVKC

O'P SI FEUR UNX HOKEX...

...O'QQ NEGEK PURE OH.

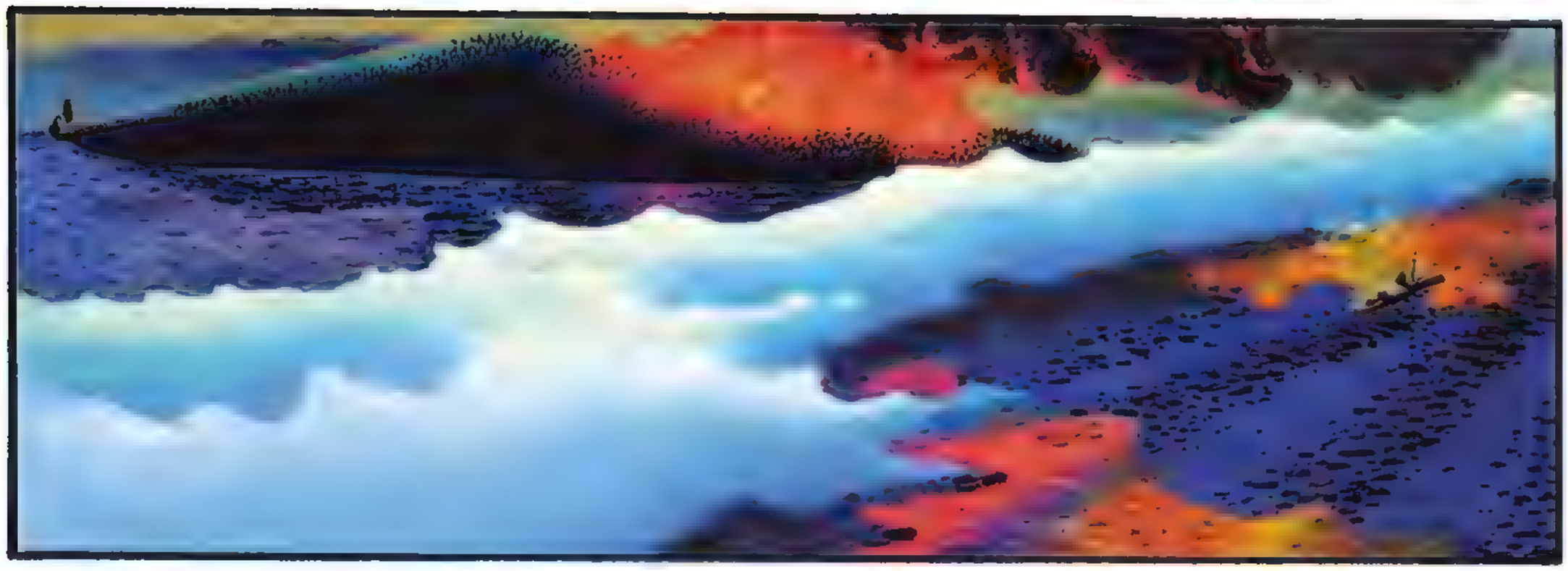
WIIX!

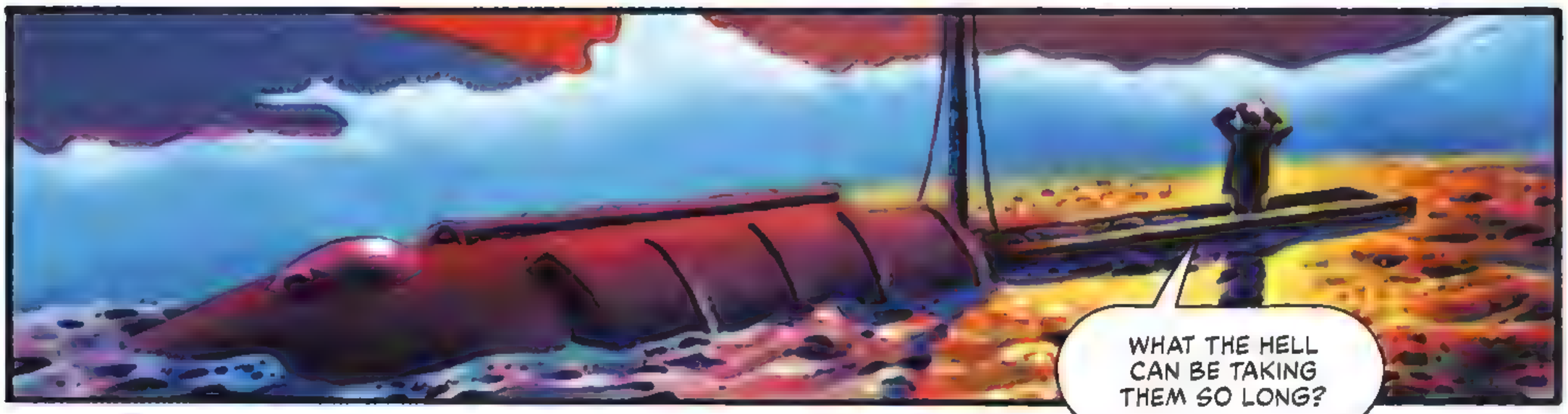
SPLASH!

DAWN BROKE OVER DREMURTH. THE FLAMING PARTICLE CONTINUED TO SCORCH THE TINY ISLAND'S BACK WHILE THE DESPERATE DRAMA OF THE ALIENS AND THE HERMIT UNFOLDED.

PANT PANT PANT!

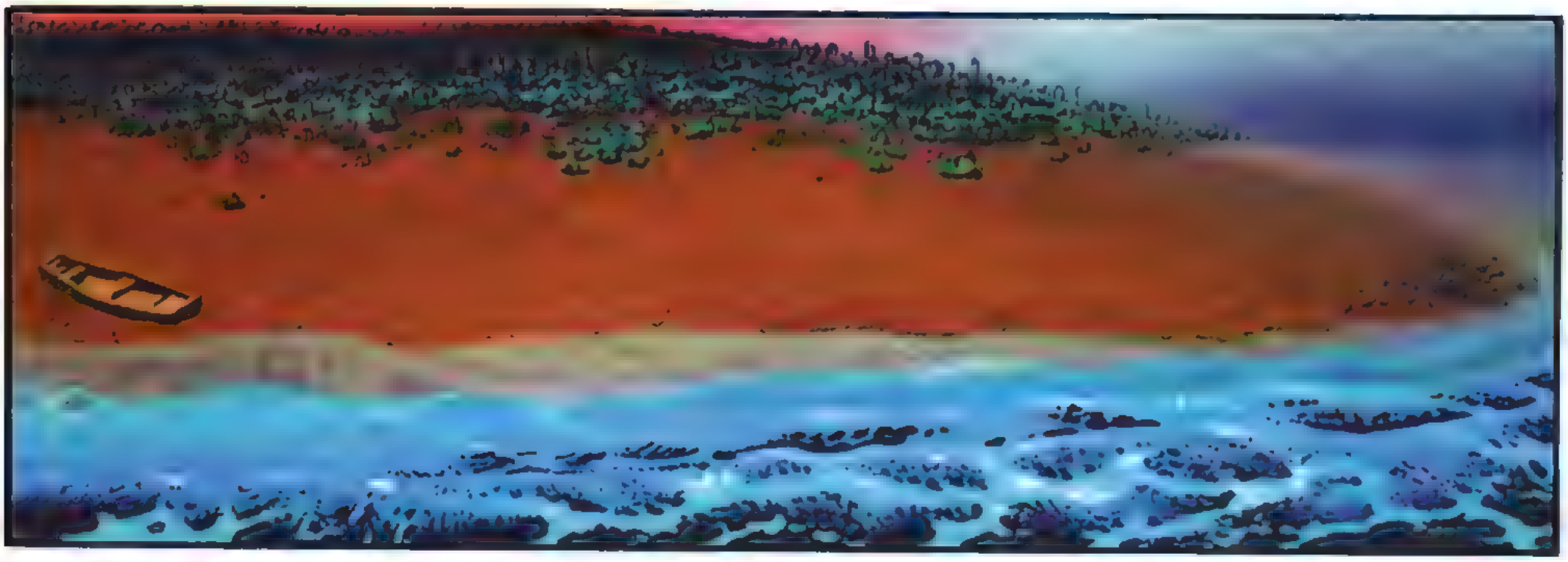
OH NO! IT'S ANOTHER ONE!




WHAT THE HELL CAN BE TAKING THEM SO LONG?

DID THAT FIRE BRING SOME GIFT FROM THE SKY...? LIKE GOLD?

SSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS
BUBBLE
BL-BUBBLE
BLUB BLUB
BL-BU



TUGE CIA WIIX?

EEEEEH!

A CORPSE HAS RISEN TO SEEK REVENGE!

NO, NO! IT WANTS TO EAT HUMAN FLESH!

OH GOD, ***ME!***

MQEUSE VOGE PE WIIX.

BLUF

CHOMP
SMACK
MUNCH

WHAT? YOU'RE JUST HUNGRY FOR ***REGULAR*** FOOD?

MAYBE YOU'D LIKE A DRINK, TOO.

IT, CIA'KE U SUONH. CIA'GE SUGEX PC QOWE!

O'P UWKUOX PC WKOENX KIL, OS IN U XIIPEX EKKUNX UZIGE. O SENSE HTE EVVS UKE ZEONV LAOYRQC EDHONVAOSTEX, INE ZC INE.

WHAT A STRANGE LANGUAGE YOU'RE SPEAKING. I WISH I COULD UNDERSTAND.

CIA UNX O PASH ESYUME.

YOU MEAN ME...

...AND YOU...

...GO! I GET IT!

KAKA PHOOOMM

XUNVEK!

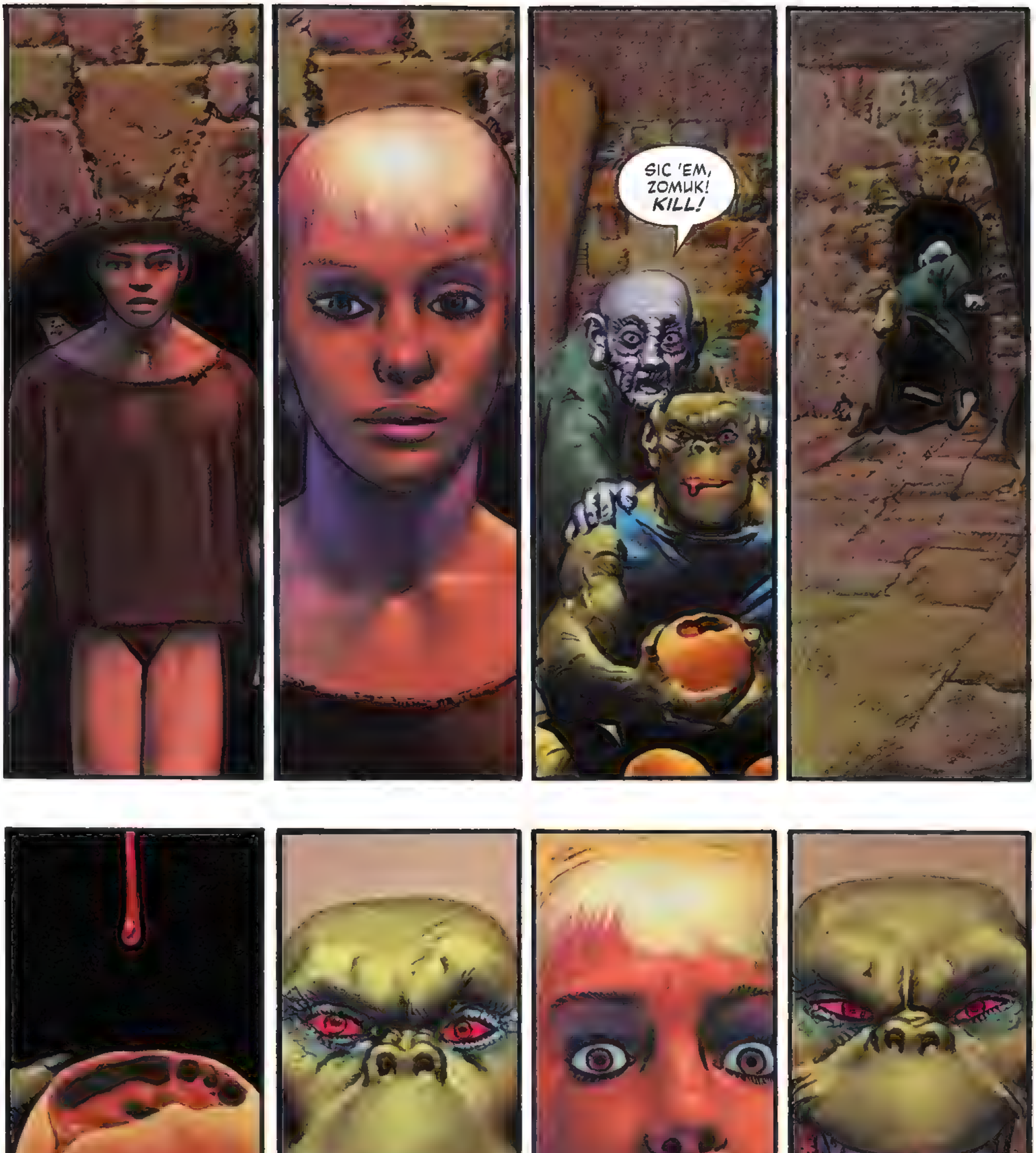
MMM, THREE LEFT. MAYBE I'LL EAT ONE NOW AND THEN THE OTHERS WITH THE COOK, AFTER A NAP.

ZOMUK! ZOMUK! WE'RE UNDER ATTACK!

AAH!

MASTER. ZOMUK KILL PIRATE. NOW ZOMUK HAVE COOK!

YOU'LL HAVE ***NOTHING*** UNTIL YOU FINISH THE JOB!


SIC 'EM, ZOMUK! KILL!

EEEEEEEEEYYYYAAAAAAAAAAUGH!!

WHAT IN THE WORLD WAS THAT?

O XIN'H HTONR CIA FUNH HI RNIF...

...ER, DON'T WANT KNOW.

YIPE, FE PASH TAKKC...GO NOW!

SMEK!
BLDK
CRASH

GAUGH!
KRDBK
AARG!

BLDK

KRND

WAIT, WHAT'S THE HURRY? NO ONE'S CHASING US.

FE PASH TAKKC. *HURRY!*

OH, HERE'S SOME TOPATOES. WE'D BETTER COLLECT A FEW. WE'LL NEED THEM LATER.

XUNVEK... DANGER!

IT. WIIX--*FOOD?* OS OH VIIX? *GOOD?*

THEY'RE DELICIOUS.

CLAMS HERE. DIG!

CES, YES! CLAMS GOOD?

KRAK

SKRAK!

WHUD

UOF!

THUMP

:PANT:
:PANT:
:PANT!:

YES, NOW ZOMUK EAT LAST EGG!

?

UNH!

SOMETHING'S DREADFULLY WRONG. THEY'RE DESCENDING LIKE VULTURES TO STEAL MY TREASURES!

I MUST TAKE THEM AWAY AND HIDE THEM.

UNH!
EERGH!

:PANT:
:PANT:
:PANT!:

AN IMPERCEPTIBLE VIBRATION SHUDDERED THROUGH THE ISLAND'S BULK. THEN, AFTER A PAUSE, IT SHOOK AGAIN. BUT THIS TIME NO ONE MISSED IT.

RRUUMMMBLE

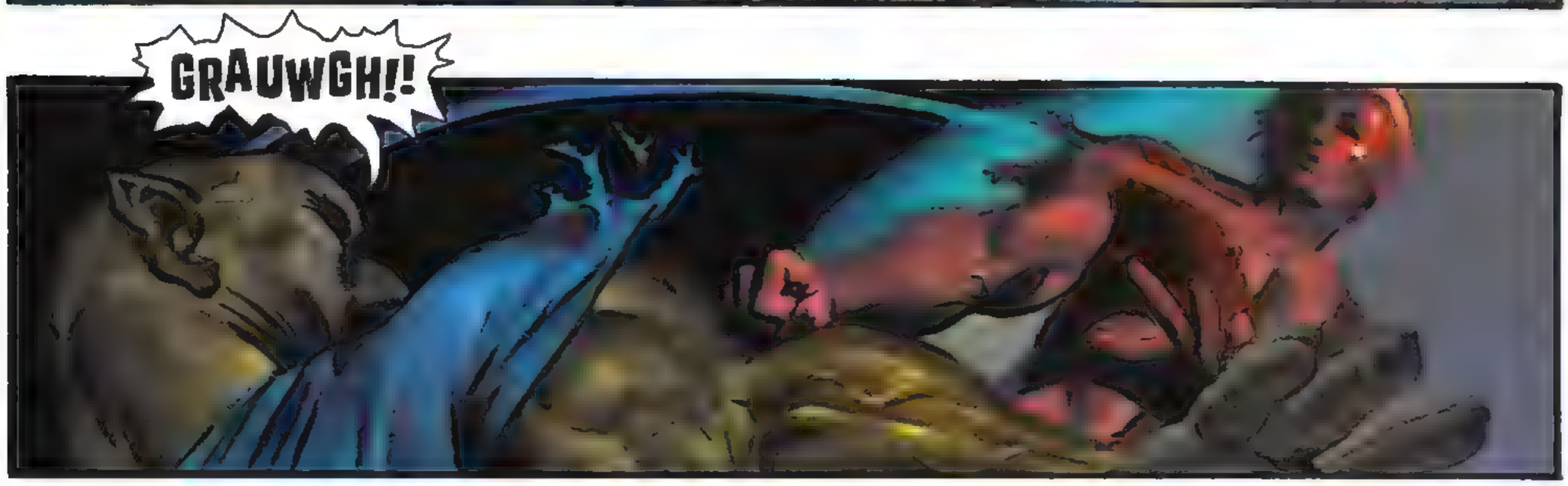
WHAT?

OOH!

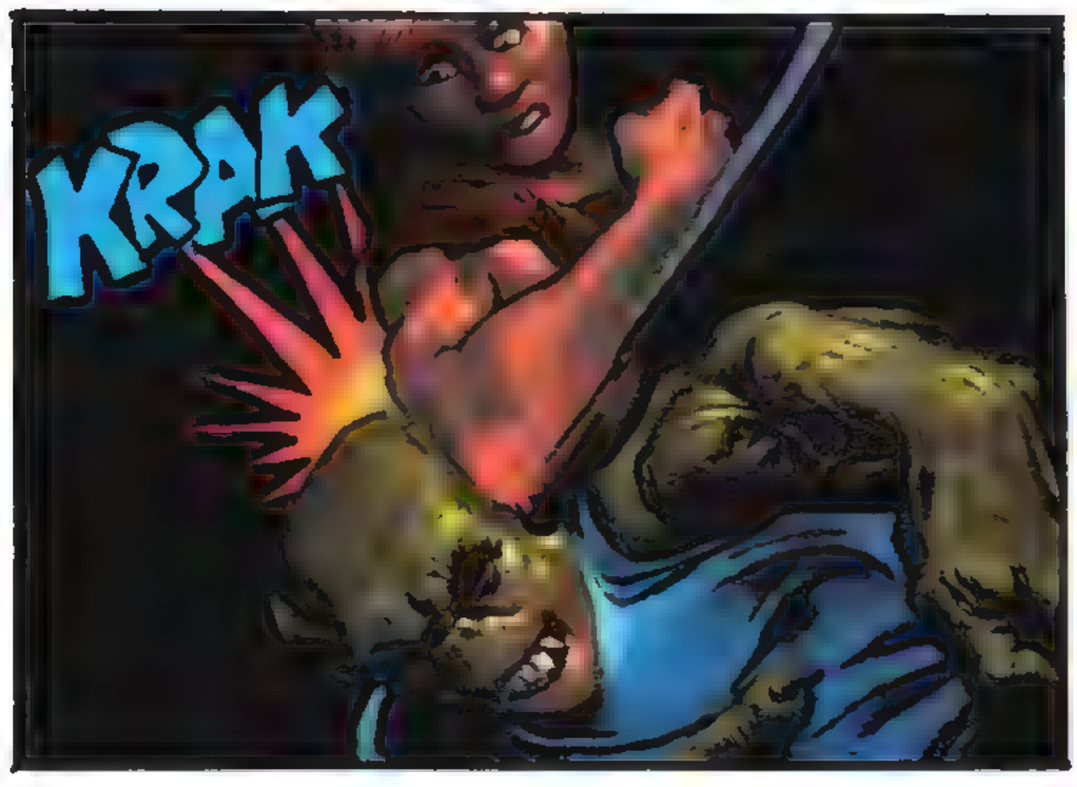
SPLAT

AH! WHAT'S HAPPENING?

NO MORE FOOD, PUCCA! HURRY!


GRAUWGH!!

BASH


KRAK

THROK

THRAK

:PANT:
:PANT:
:PANT!:

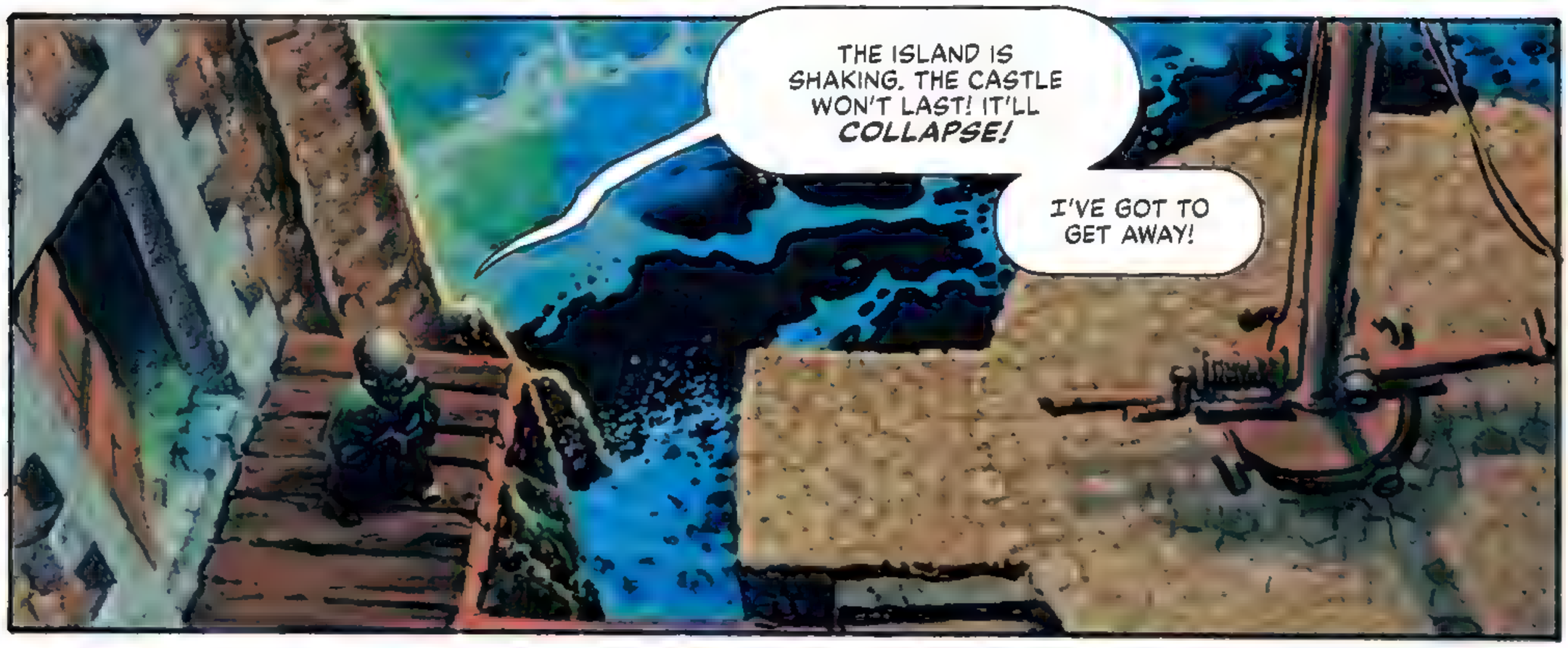
:PANT:
:PANT:
:PK--

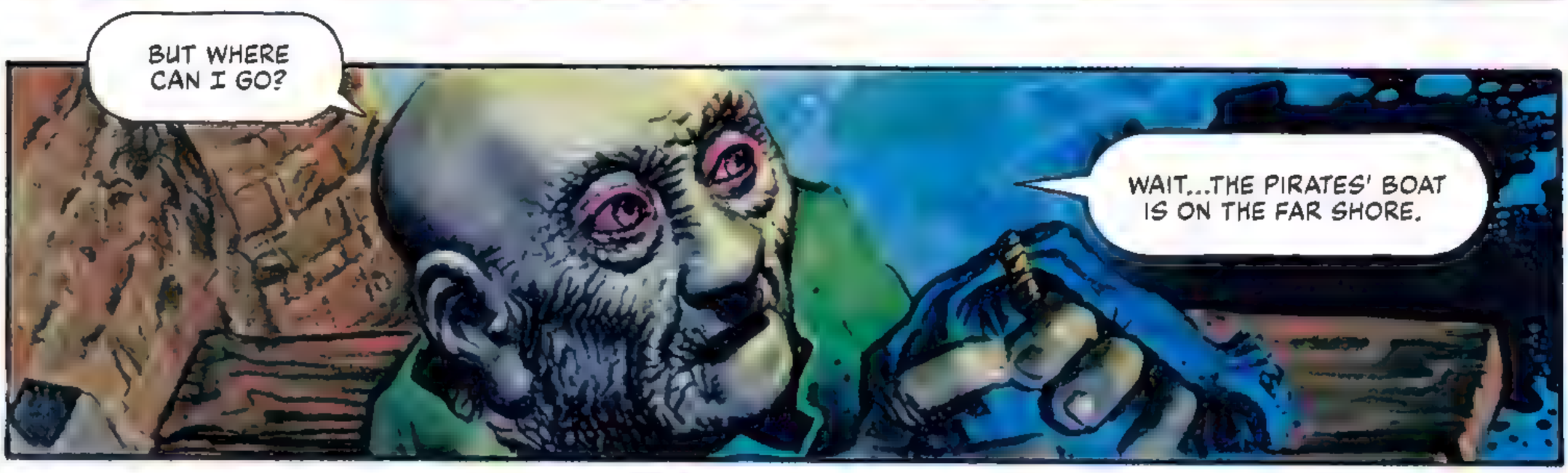
YAAAUGHK!

KRAK

CRUNCH

BASH


THE ISLAND IS SHAKING. THE CASTLE WON'T LAST! IT'LL COLLAPSE!
I'VE GOT TO GET AWAY!


BUT WHERE CAN I GO?
WAIT...THE PIRATES' BOAT IS ON THE FAR SHORE.

MAST!
PUSH!
THOSE CRUSTACEANS ARE GOOD TO EAT TOO!
NO! MUST LEAVE NOW!

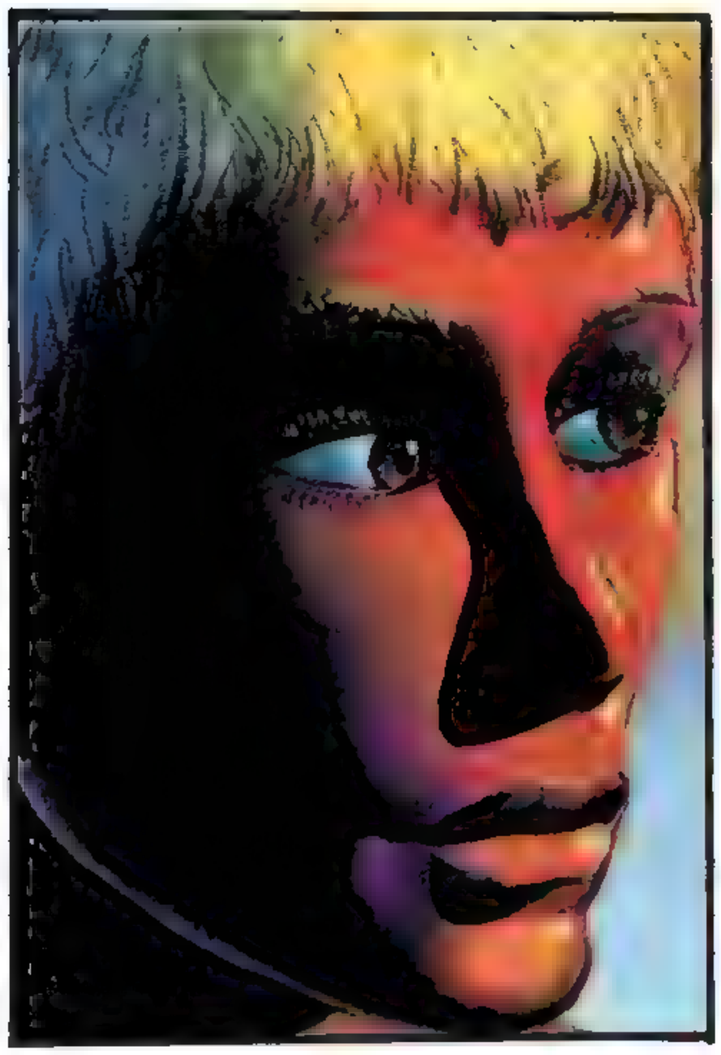
EEEEEEEEEEYAAAAAAAUGH!

NOOO!

HAUGH!

THUNK!

RIP



?!

BBRRUUMMBBLLEE

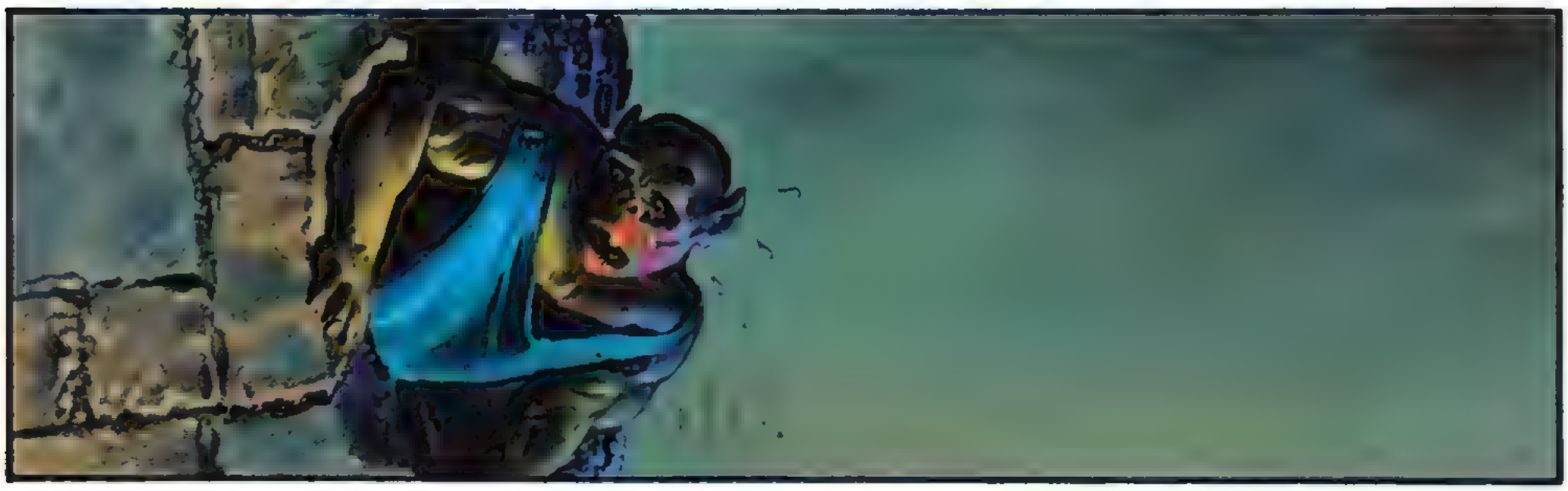
A LONG, LOW TREMBLE BEGAN AND GREW...AND GREW. CACTUSES FELL. LICHENS RELEASED THEIR GRIP AND SLID DOWN THE HILL WITH THE CHURNING SAND.

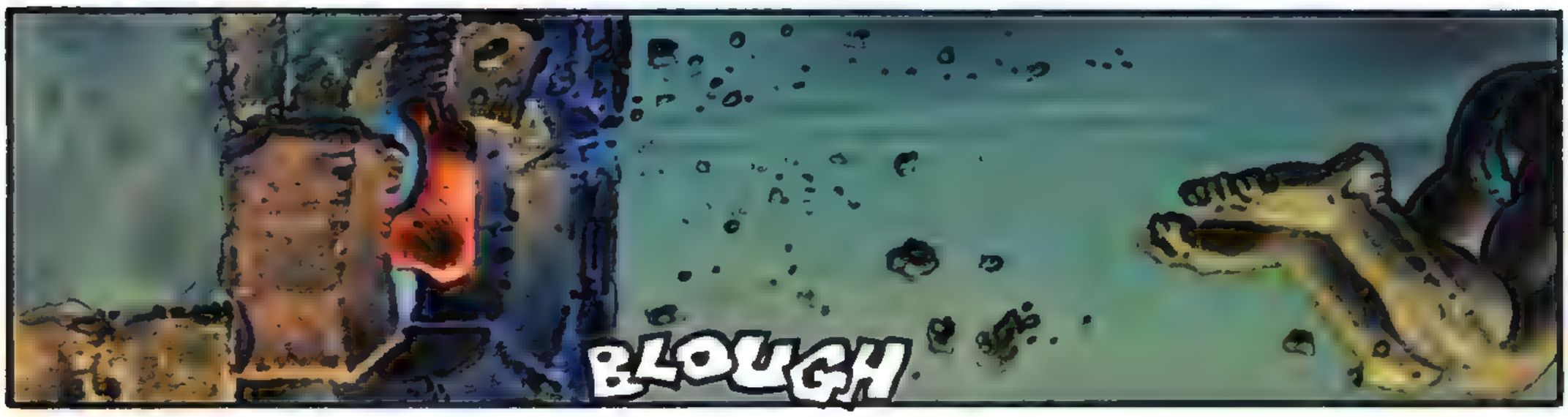
SUDDENLY, A VIOLENT HEAVING FORCE THRUST UP THROUGH THE MASSIVE HULK.

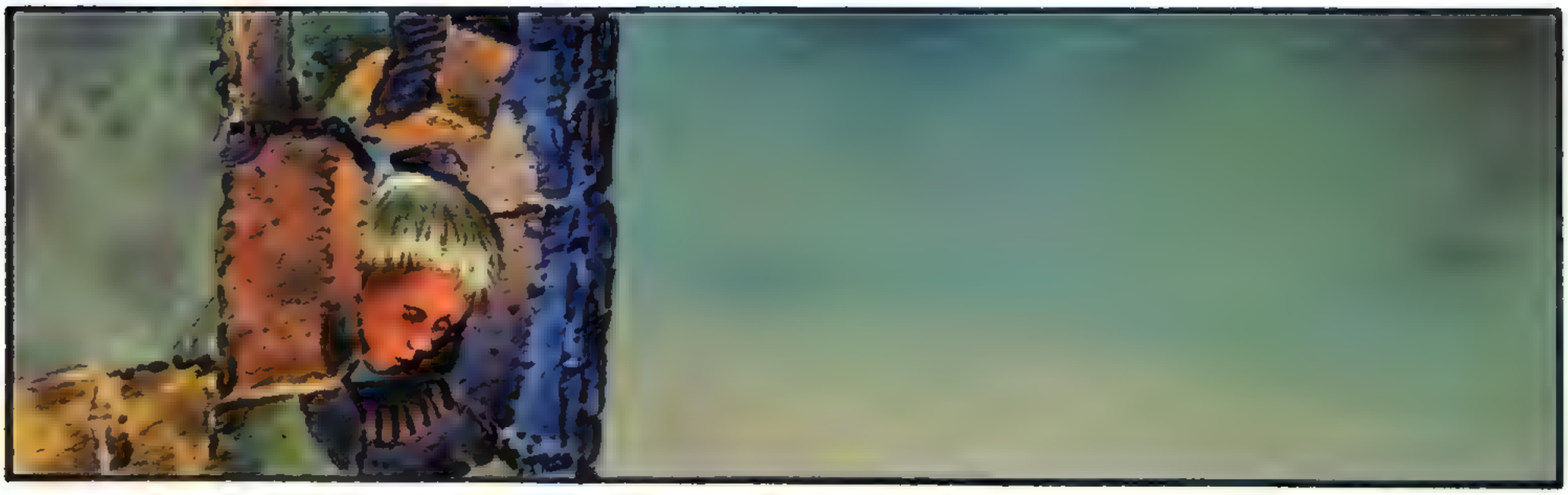
YAAAAA!

SPLASH

HIGH!
CLAP




BLOUGH



LIKE A GIGANTIC BEAST FROM THE DAWN OF TIME, THE ISLAND, MADDENED BY THE BURNING COAL ON ITS BACK, THREW OFF THE COVERING OF SAND AND VEGETATION.

THE INCREDIBLE BULK SURGED FORWARD AND BEGAN TO SINK. WATER RUSHED OVER ITS MASSIVE BACK. THEN A HUGE FLIPPER ROSE FROM A HUNDRED YARDS OFFSHORE.

SSSSQQQQUUEEERROOOOAAAARRR

THE ISLAND BEGAN TO RISE AGAIN, HIGHER AND HIGHER. A CREATURE OF UNIMAGINABLE DIMENSIONS SQUEALED AND SCREAMED IN ANGRY PAIN FROM THE **COSMIC HOT FOOT.**

SSSSSHHHR

RROOOOOU

UUSSSHHHH

ROOAR!

KER-SPLASH

THE TURBULENCE CONTINUED FOR NEARLY AN HOUR, THEN SLOWLY SUBSIDED. NOTHING REMAINED TO MARK THE PASSING OF THE ISLAND EXCEPT SOME FLOATING VEGETATION, A STRETCH OF DIRTY FOAM, AND A FEW INTERMITTENT BUBBLES.

A TINY FIGURE CLUTCHED DESPERATELY AT SOME FLOATING DEBRIS. HE HELD A GLOWING OBJECT IN HIS ROBES.

DON'T PULL HIM OUT. HE KEPT ME AS A SLAVE.

IAK MKEXOYUPENH OS MKEYUKOIAS. TW POVTH TUGE SROQQS IK RNIFQEXVE IW GUQAE. TE PASH ZE SUGEX...

...YES, SAVE!

THE STONE! SAVE IT!

KLRK

NOOOO!

SPLUK

AS HIS NEW FRIEND, PUCCA, PREPARED A MEAL ON THE TINY BOAT, THE MAL THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT THE FUTURE HELD FOR HIM ON THIS STRANGE WORLD. DID THE FEMALE WARRIOR SURVIVE AND PERHAPS SAVE AN EGG? IF SO, SHE WOULD SEEK HIM OUT. HE PONDERED THAT FOR A MOMENT AND RUBBED HIS ITCHING SKIN, REDDENED BY THE RADIATION OF THE SPACESHIP'S POWER UNIT.

OOOH NO, NO, NO! IT'S GONE! NOOOO...GONE...

HE WASN'T SURE HE WANTED TO BE FOUND BY HER.

TWO MILES TO THE SOUTH, ANOTHER FIGURE SAT ALONE, RUBBING HER RED SKIN. HER HAPPINESS FOR HER SURVIVAL AND THE SURVIVAL OF THE EGG HAD DISSIPATED, REPLACED BY WONDER AND A SENSE OF DÉJÀ VU ABOUT THE SEACRAFT WHERE SHE SAT.

IT WAS A SUBMARINE DESIGNED BY HER OWN PEOPLE AND ASSEMBLED HERE ON THIS PLANET YEARS AGO, WHILE SHE HAD FLOATED IN A DREAMLESS SLEEP, IN COSMIC SPACE. A COLONY HAD BEEN HERE AND LEFT THIS ARTIFACT.

SHE DIDN'T FEEL WELL. THE RADIATION HAD DONE SOMETHING TO HER. SHE THOUGHT ABOUT THE MAL, AND ABOUT THE CREATURE, ZOMUK. A FAMILIAR FRAGMENT OF FLOATING DEBRIS CAUGHT HER EYE.

NOOO! DON'T HIT ZOMUK!

OH, EGG TO EAT NOW?

AND SO...

PART TWO

SHUFFLED SEEDS, SCATTERED

THE YOUNG WARRIOR STANDS AT THE EDGE OF THE COMPETITION STAGE, NERVOUSLY WAITING FOR THE OPPONENT TO APPEAR. THE AUDIENCE OF SCHOOLMATES MURMURS EXPECTANTLY. THE SCHOOLS HAVE ENTERED ONLY THEIR BEST GRADUATES IN THIS EXERCISE. JUST TO BE STANDING HERE IS A GREAT HONOR.

KIL'S FINGERS TWITCH.

ALL IN THE AUDITORIUM FREEZE IN SILENCE AS A TALL FIGURE RISES IN THE BLUE SECTION AND APPROACHES.

THE ROBED BLUE IS UNKNOWN TO KIL. UNKNOWN TO ALL. EVEN THE JUDGE SEEMS CURIOUS.

THE HOOD IS PULLED AWAY. A QUESTIONING SIGH OF DISBELIEF SPREADS THROUGH THE MASSED STUDENTS.

AS THE ROBES HIT THE FLOOR, ALL SOUND DIES.

A MAL! THE BLUES HAVE FIELDED A HUGE MAL AGAINST THE REDS' KIL.

BLUE, YOU'RE LATE, SO YOU SHALL TAKE THE POSITION OF DEFENDER OF THE SCEPTER.

AND YOU MUST WAIT FOR RED'S FIRST AGGRESSIVE MOVE.

A MAL! IT CAN'T BE. MALS AREN'T BRED WARRIORS. BUT THIS ONE'S--

--UNREAL.

REMEMBER, THIS IS ONLY A COMMENCEMENT EXERCISE. LOOK INTO EACH OTHER'S EYES AND SWEAR YOU'LL NOT APPLY ANY DEATH TECHNIQUE.

SWEAR IT!

I SWEAR!

I SWEAR!

BEGIN!

BIG BLUE IMMEDIATELY SPRINGS TO THE SECOND LEVEL.

RED PAUSES, STILL MENTALLY OFF BALANCE.

THE CROWD BRINGS KIL TO LIFE.

THUMP

THUMP

A SERIES OF HANDSPRINGS--

RE RED! RED! RED! RE RED

--BORES BLUE.

YAWN

THUMP THUMP THUMP THUMP THUMP THUMP THUMP THUMP

EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEYAAAUUGH!

HE IS READY FOR RED'S LAUNCH.

WHAP

THUD

BUT NOT FOR THE REBOUND.

THE MAL HITS THE DECK ROLLING.

THE AGGRESSOR DIVES FOR THE PRIZED SCEPTER...

KABLIK

...COLLIDING WITH THE AGILE DEFENDER.

BONK

HIGH-FLYING GYMNASTICS GIVE WAY TO CLOSE SPARRING.

TWAK

IT IS APPARENT TO ALL THAT KIL OUTCLASSES THE BLUE HULK.

SUDDENLY HE COUNTERS--

BUMP

--KNOCKING KIL TO THE FLOOR AS THOUGH STRUCK BY LIGHTNING.

AAUUUGH!

THEY STARE AT EACH OTHER, BOTH ASTOUNDED BY KIL'S STRANGE REACTION TO THE KICK.

YOU'RE NO WARRIOR.

A PREQUEEN!

YOU'RE OUT OF YOUR TINY MIND!

RRRA AAAAA

THE ALARM SIREN!

ATTENTION! THIS IS NOT A DRILL. WE ARE UNDER ATTACK. TO YOUR STATIONS. DEFEND THE QUEEN!

THE NEW WARRIORS GRAB THEIR WEAPONS AND RUSH TO THEIR INITIATION.

THE INVADING ENTOMORPHS ARE SIGHTED. THE STUDENT WARRIORS DO NOT HESITATE.

BRATATAT

BRATATA

BRAT

TAT

THE ATTACK IS FAST, WELL ORGANIZED, AND BLOODY.

BRATATAT

THE QUEEN! SAVE THE QUEEN!

AAAAGH!

RIP

BRATATAT

SKREEEEEE

AIEEEEEEE!

NOO!

GRAK

UNNH!

WAP

YAAAUGH!

BASH!

SHUNK

THOUGH DEAD, THE BEAST'S REFLEX IS STILL LETHAL.

KIL, MY PREQUEEN-- AAH--!

MAL!

M--MY QUEEN, THE ATTACKERS ARE DESTROYED.

YES, MY CHILD...BUT TOO LATE FOR ME, I FEAR.

NOOO...! PLEASE, YOUR MAJESTY. ALL WILL BE WELL. IT MUST!

COME CLOSER.

THE MAL SPOKE TRUE. YOU ***ARE*** A PREQUEEN.

BUT I AM A WARRIOR. THE HIGHEST RANKED KIL OF MY CLASS.

TRAVEL TO THE REDISCOVERED WORLD. TAKE WITH YOU MALS, WORKS, AND EGGS. THERE IT IS YOUR DUTY TO ESTABLISH A NEW NEST.

BUT--

SEEK THE MAGIC SCEPTER--*UNH!*

MAL?

NOT MAL.

OOPS!

NO! ZOMUK DO NOTHING. SEE! EVERYTHING OKAY!

CLANG

KIL PONDERED THE DREAM AS SHE CHECKED THE DEVELOPING EGG. SOMETHING IN HER, SOME HORMONE, COLORED THE REAL EVENTS. SHE WASN'T REALLY CHOSEN TO BE THE QUEEN OF THE ILL-FATED COLONY, NOR DID SHE REMEMBER THE MAL AND HIS CLUB BEING SO IMPORTANT.

BUT SHE **HAD** BEEN FEELING DIFFERENT SINCE THE CRASH WEEKS AGO. WAS IT BECAUSE OF THE SHIP'S RADIATION? WAS IT POSSIBLE THAT SHE REALLY WAS A PREQUEEN?

PART THREE

STRANGE NATIVITY

SOON, I THINK. I HOPE THE RADIATION DIDN'T DAMAGE IT.

WHY MISTRESS SAVE EGG? IT BETTER FOR FOOD. ZOMUK HUNGRY. ZOMUK TIRED OF FISH.

I SAVE IT BECAUSE I WAS CHOSEN AS QUEEN OF ZOMERE, AND THIS MAY BE THE LAST OF MY PEOPLE. ON MY WORLD, BEFORE I WAS CHOSEN, I WAS A KIL, A WARRIOR. A KIL IS BRED TO PROTECT HER PEOPLE.

I'VE TOLD YOU A DOZEN TIMES AND YOU STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND. YOU'RE REALLY STUPID, ZOMUK.

YES, ZOMUK STUPID.

AND YOU'VE GOT A ONE-TRACK MIND ABOUT THIS EGG. NOW THAT WE'VE REACHED THIS ISLAND, YOU MUST LEAVE ME.

THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE IS FOR ME TO KILL YOU.

NOW GET OUT OF HERE!

YES, ZOMUK GONE.

SSHHHROOOUURRR

WHAAA

HER ATTENTION DIVERTED BY THE EXPLOSION, KIL MISSED THE HIDDEN GOONS UNTIL--

REMEMBER, BOYS, ALIVE IF POSSIBLE.

LIKE HELL!

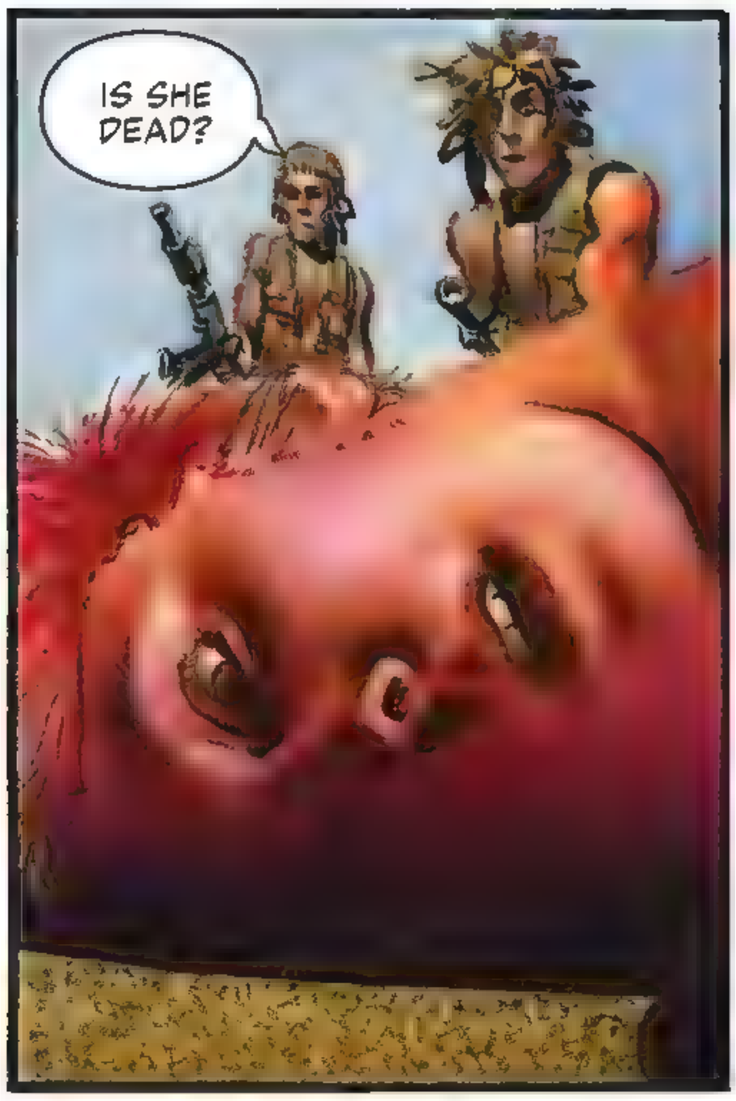
BLAM!

SPLAT!

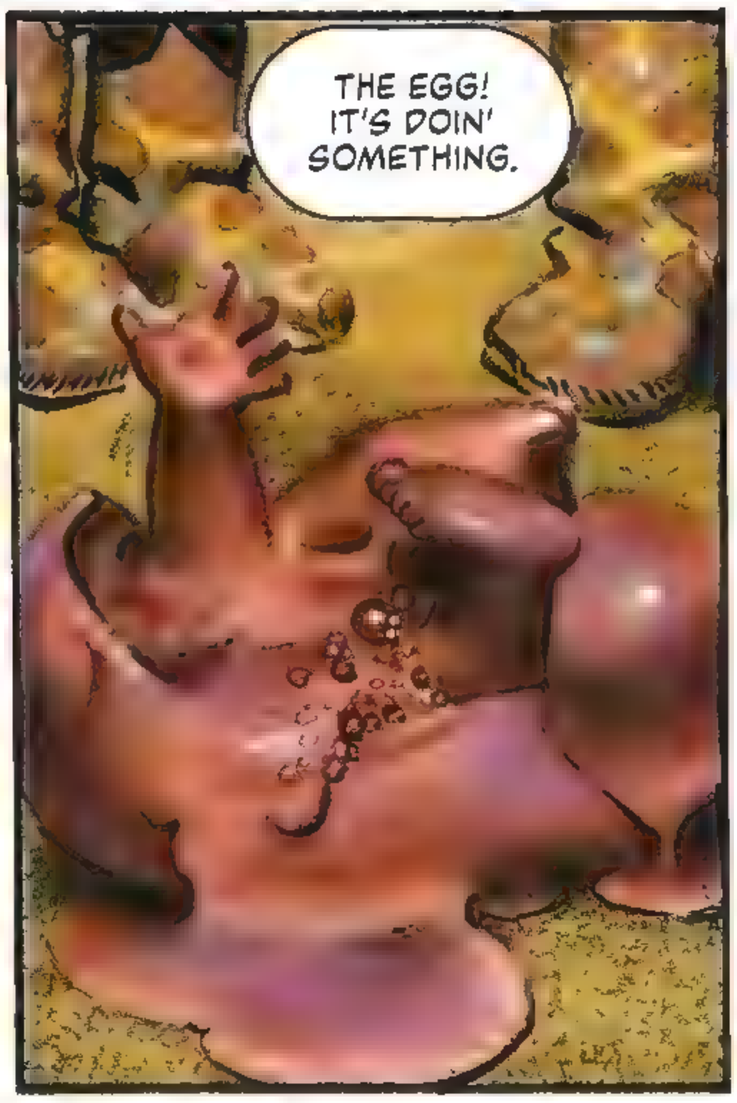
WAIT, I--

THERE'S NO INDEPENDENT THINKING IN THIS SQUAD, JERK. FOLLOW ORDERS OR...*DIE!*

BRATATATAT

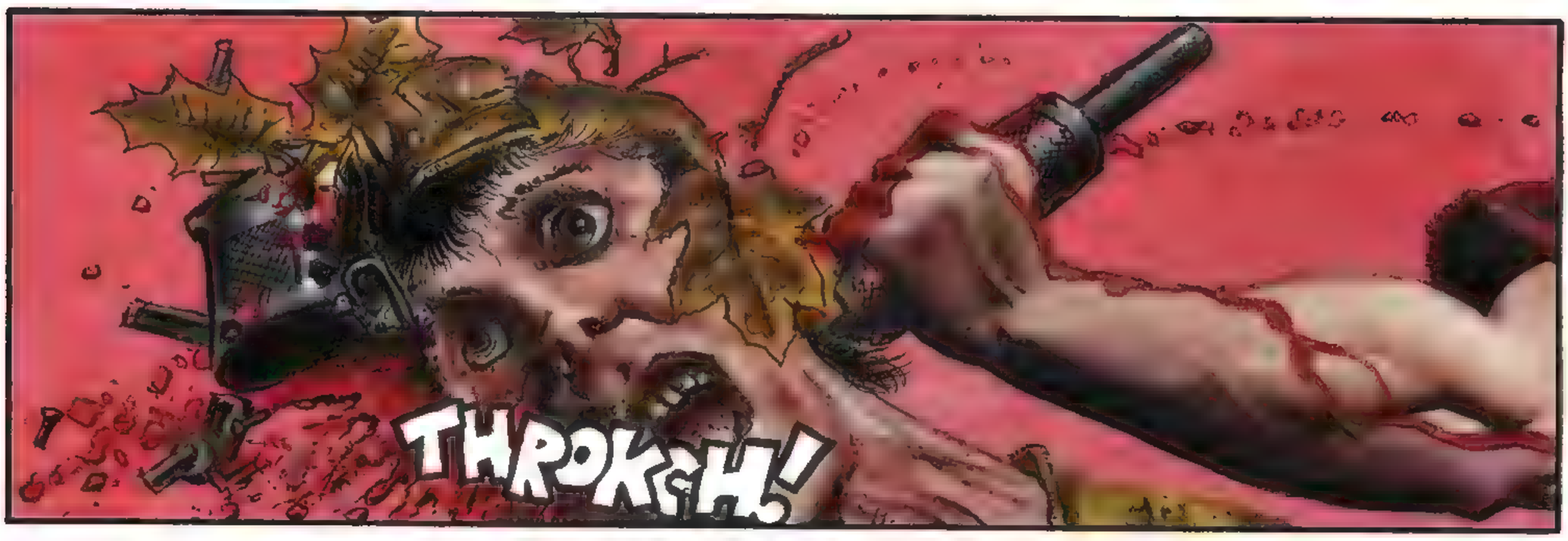

IS SHE DEAD?

EH? HAVE A LOOK AT THIS, NORK.


THE EGG! IT'S DOIN' SOMETHING.

YEH, IT'S HATCHIN'. MAYBE THE MASTER WON'T PUNISH US FOR SNUFFIN' THE WOMAN IF HE LIKES THIS.

SKADCH!


THROKGH!

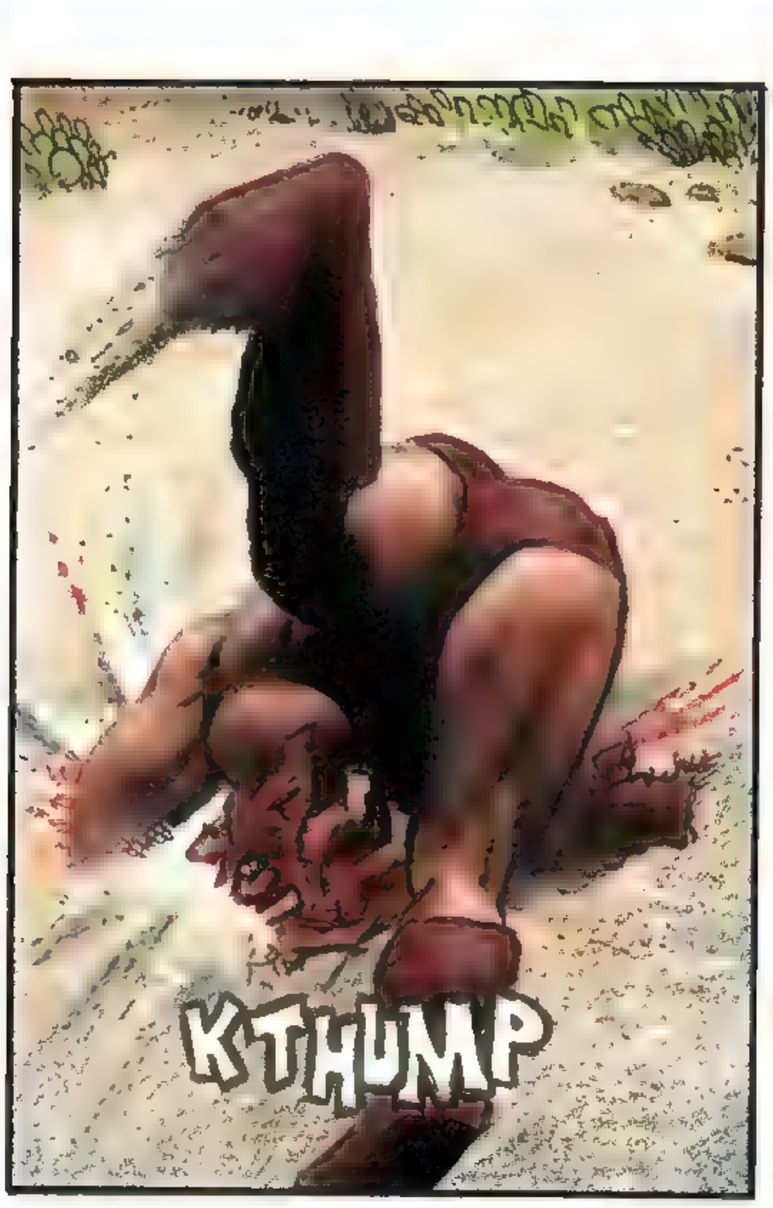
BRAT
TWALUGH

THAT

THRAK!

NOW, LITTLE ONE...? NOW IS THE TIME YOU CHOOSE?

WAAAAH! SQUEEK!


KTHUMP

WAAAA!

KIL QUEEN LOOK DEAD. NOW ZOMUK EAT EGG...WHAT? EGG HATCHED.

HMF! THAT OKAY. BABY GOOD TO EAT TOO...MAYBE BETTER.

SQUEEK!

NO, ZOMUK! I'LL TAKE THE BABY. I MIGHT USE IT IN MY EXPERIMENTS.

BUT YOU CAN HAVE THE ALIEN'S CARCASS. YOU WERE HER FRIEND, YES?

JUST DON'T TAKE TOO LONG. THE AIR FORT WILL DEPART WITHIN THE HOUR.

COME, SCON.

YES, FATHER.

WAAA!

STINGY BITCH! WHY YOU NOT GIVE ZOMUK EGG TO EAT?

AND YOU BEAT ZOMUK!

THUP

HOW CAN ZOMUK PUNISH KIL QUEEN REAL GOOD?

...UM, YES!

SSS

BAD KIL QUEEN!

SHUNK!

UUUG--

KRAK

THUMP

--UUUG--

--UUUG--

PART FOUR

PROMISES, PROMISES

WE'RE BOTH STRANGERS HERE, KIL--PERHAPS THE LAST OF OUR RACE. FATE DESTROYED OUR COLONY AND SEPARATED US. WE MUST STAY TOGETHER NOW.

I WILL TAKE YOU TO THE HUT I BUILT WITH PUCCA. THIS WORLD HAS GOOD FOOD, AND SHE CAN PREPARE IT BETTER THAN ANYONE.

I'M DIFFERENT NOW. CHANGED BY THE RADIATION AND THE NEW LIFE I LEAD. SO ARE YOU.

YOU'LL BE BETTER SOON. I PROMISE.

YES, BE QUIET. DRINK THIS.

WAIT. WHERE'S THE ***CHILD?*** THE ***EGG HATCHED!*** WHERE--?

M-MAL. IS THAT YOU?

I FOUND YOU, KIL. THERE'S NO EGG. NO CHILD.

YES THERE IS, YOU FOOL. I MUST FIND IT-- ***OOH*** MY HEAD.

LIE DOWN. YOU MUST REST OR YOU'LL DIE.

PROMISE ME, MAL, THAT YOU'LL HELP ME FIND THE CHILD.

I PROMISE.

YOOO! STRANGE TRAVELER! YOU STOP AND LISTEN TO HAIRY KOPOK!

WHAT DAT YOU DRAG? LOOK LIKE NICE TIDBIT. MAYBE WE MAKE TRADE.

...WHAT?

I TELL YOU WHAT--YOU GIM HAIRY KOPOK WOMAN. DEN, I LET YOU GO, FREE AND CLEAR. NO GOUGE EYE, NO BROKE LEG. HOWZAT?

NO FUNNY BIZ WID DAT STICKER, BO...

DIS IRON GOT NERVOUS TRIGGER.

HEY, NO PROBLEM, HAIRY KOPOK. JUST LOWER THAT GUN AND I'LL BE ON MY WAY.

I WAS ONLY TAKING HER BACK TO MY HUT TO EAT ANYWAY. BUT IF YOU WANT HER, SHE'S YOURS. SAY, DID YOU GET A LOAD OF HER CHEST?

OH, IT'S MUCH NICER NOW, MA. THAT OLD ZEG KEPT ME FOR A SLAVE, BUT MAL TOOK ME AWAY. THEN ZEG'S ISLAND SANK.

I KNOW HE SEEMS NICE, CHILD, BUT ARE YOU GOING TO TRUST THAT TALL WHITE MAN?

...AND YOU WORK TOO HARD, PUCCA, WASHING AND COOKING. NO MAN DESERVES THAT.

THERE, THAT'S DONE. LET'S GO SEE WHAT WE CAN FIND ON THE BEACH.

I SWEAR IT TAKES BOTH OF US JUST TO KEEP HIM IN FOOD.

MAL *DOES* EAT A LOT. AND HE'S MADE SOME GAINS, TOO. REMEMBER HOW THIN HE WAS WHEN WE BROUGHT YOU TO LIVE WITH US?

HE NEEDS IT. SO I MAKE IT FOR HIM...AND--

I GUESS IT AGREES WITH YOU.

...NOW WE'RE MAKING SOMETHING TOGETHER.

BLESS YOU, CHILD.

LOOK, MA! WHAT IS IT?

NEVER MIND THAT!

WHICH ONE OF YOU IS PUCCA?

WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?

I'LL ASK THE QUESTIONS HERE, YOU OLD BAG!

STOP! LEAVE HER ALONE.

NO, SON. IT'S THE OTHER ONE. SHE'S MY COOK.

YOU! OLD MAN ZEG! WE PULLED YOU OUT OF THE OCEAN. WE SAVED YOU AND PUT YOU ASHORE. WHAT DO YOU WANT?

I WANT WHAT IS ***MINE! YOU*** ARE MY PROPERTY, MY COOK.

YOU AND YOUR SKINNY BOYFRIEND THOUGHT YOU COULD HAVE YOUR OWN WAY WITH AN OLD MAN AND ESCAPE YOUR FATE.

BUT NOW I'VE GOT MY STRONG SONS TO ENFORCE MY RIGHT.

TAKE HER ABOARD, MURK.

FATHER, WHAT ABOUT THE OLD ONE?

HUMM...NO, TAWG. I DON'T NEED HER.

DON'T NEED YOU, OLD HAG. GET OUT OF HERE.

SCUM! YOU'LL PAY FOR THIS.

YOU'LL PAY!

SLIK CLIK

TSCATATATATATATCHOOOOOLLLLWWW...

WHAT WAS THAT?

HMMF! DAT GUNFIRE. SMALL AUTO...MAYBE ONE MILE AWAY, MAYBE LESS.

NEVER MIND DAT. KOPOK WANT SEE WOMAN.

HELP YOURSELF.

HE HE HE! ***GOOOOD!***

SHIK!

SHHHRRRRIIIIICH

BURGLE GLURK

SORRY, HAIRY KOPOK. SHE'S NOT FOR YOU.

SPLAT

GURGLE

I DON'T THINK I WOULD HAVE BEEN CAPABLE OF SUCH A THING BACK ON OUR WORLD, KIL.

BUT A NEW ROLE HAS BEEN PUT UPON ME.

NOR DO I FEEL REMORSE FOR THAT CREATURE.

ACTUALLY THERE'S A STRANGE EXCITEMENT TO IT, A PRIMEVAL EXHILARATION.

MAYBE IT'S A LITTLE LIKE THAT OTHER MOMENT WHEN I WAS CLOSE TO DEATH BY DROWNING, AND YOU BREATHED LIFE BACK INTO ME.

WHAT--?

PUCCA'S MOTHER... NO!

I PROMISED YOU'D GET WELL. I PROMISED TO HELP YOU FIND OUR PEOPLE'S LAST CHILD. FINE PROMISES MADE BY A FOOL. BUT WHO WILL HELP ME--

--FIND PUCCA--

--KILL THE ASSHOLE THAT MURDERED HER MOTHER--

--AND KEEP MY PROMISES?

I PROMISE.

THE END OF THE BEGINNING.

EPILOGUE

So ends the story of Children of Fire. Its survivors went on to become intertwined in each other's plans. Zeg came to possess another island, one that floated in the sky. The radiation triggered a genetic change in Kil. She became a powerful ruler on this planet of violence. Mal and Pucca became mates and eluded Kil for a while. Their offspring challenged Kil's rule between bouts of madness. But those are other stories.

THE METAMORPHOSIS OF KIL AND MAL

JOSÉ VILLARRUBIA

According to Merriam-Webster, *androgynous* means "having the characteristics or nature of **both** male and female," "**neither** specifically feminine nor masculine," and "having traditional male and female roles **obscured or reversed**" (emphasis mine). All three of these meanings of the word are central to this new phase in the Den saga.

In the first two volumes of this series, we witnessed how the recurring theme of metamorphosis is essential to Den's story. It all began when Corben, driven by the desire to depict an ordinary man undergoing a transformation into a muscular hero for the animated short film *Neverwhere* (1968), mixed live action and simple animation. When the tale continued in comic book form, Den was depicted as prodigiously endowed. The women in this fantastical world were also distinct, with petite frames and prominent bosoms. Corben explained that this was intended to emphasize the difference between genders, and his point certainly came across loud and clear. However, in this volume, everything was about to change.

As you have seen, this book unfolds in three segments. The first introduces two peculiar characters who arrive in Neverwhere in space pods: a remarkably muscular female named Kil and a skeletal male named Mal. The second reveals that these visitors are the last survivors of a eusocial species resembling bees or ants. The third unveils the true identities of Kil and Mal. As their transformations begin, it is revealed that Kil will become the Red Queen, while Mal grows into the first Den.

So far, the story had revolved around the notion that two average earthmen, Daniel and David, seemingly shared the same idealized body as Den. However, this narrative is now turned upside down. This installment boldly challenges the hyper-gendered physical characteristics associated with its main characters. Instead of being a beefy bodybuilder, Den appears as an emaciated figure, inexplicably alive. On the other hand, the voluptuous Red Queen takes on a very muscular form. Deprived of externally visible signs of their sex, both characters lose their defining traits. Corben's choice to diverge radically from their original morphologies aligns with the constant transformations experienced by the primary characters throughout the series. We had last seen, for example, how Den's friend Tarn turned into a hideous monster in volume two. But this is the first time that Corben overtly challenges traditional gender presentation and roles. At first, Mal is helpless and completely fragile. And while the character of the Red Queen had been shown to be physically imposing before, as Kil she is superhero-like in her strength and agility.

By the 1970s, androgyny had become a significant part of American mainstream pop culture, with its most visible presence in pop music and glam rock. Ultra-thin singers like David Bowie, Mick Jagger, and Iggy Pop were presented to the public as new male ideals to emulate. And, of course, they often wore makeup. Regarding Kil, by 1979, even Marvel comics had introduced an extremely muscular heroine, She-Hulk. The character's creation was influenced by the television series *The Bionic Woman* (1973–1978). By the time the mini-series *Children of Fire*, which is the first chapter of the graphic novel, was created, the popularity of women bodybuilders had even reached the field of fine art, with photographers like Robert Mapplethorpe dedicating a book to artistic images of Lisa Lyon in 1983. So, change was in the air, and notions of gender presentation and gender roles were fluctuating.

The three parts of the story are drawn in different styles and techniques. The first one (chapter one, "Children of Fire") is painted using the unique color method that Corben had used to make his work distinct: by rendering the pages in tonal black and white and hand-painting each printing color separation. This technique was very complex and time-consuming but gave the pages a saturated and rich finish look. In order to save time, the second part (chapter two "Shuffled Seeds, Scattered") is drawn traditionally in black lines on paper and colored directly on printouts. The final part (chapters three and four, "Strange Nativity" and "Promises, Promises") is fully painted in color using mixed media: airbrush, colored pencils, inks, and acrylics. Since there are time gaps between the narratives, the shift in styles works well.

Like the previous Den volumes, the first part shows Corben using his most characteristic style at the time, the superb rendering and realization that he employed in *Mutant World*, *New Tales from the Arabian Nights*, *The Bodyssey*, and *Jeremy Brood*. It showcases the uncanny tridimensionality that he could achieve in his art. The frequent silent sequences emphasize the cinematic quality of the storytelling. And being a 100% Corben story, the ending of the section is cataclysmic as well as unexpected.

When the second part begins, the effect is startling. After all those pages of carefully rendered values and subtle details, we are confronted with a splash pinup of an unrecognizable Kil, as a veiny, extremely hard-looking person, rendered even more confusing by her body being covered in red paint. This bold choice is reminiscent of the flashback sequences in *Den* volume one. There, referring to the animated short *Neverwhere*, characters were rendered in bold, high-contrast black and white. The mood of the tale also changes. This part is completely surreal, almost satirical in its depiction of the alien civilization. The incongruity of having a humanoid alien species fighting giant spiders with firearms in the middle of an athletic competition exudes a distinct B-movie vibe, and the cartoony style of its art helps make the chapter separate from the main action. The absurdity of this origin could be seen as due to the unreliable memories of Kil, its narrator. And as a matter of fact, on the solicitations page of *DenSaga* #3, Corben described the plot of *Den 3, Children of Fire* as "What might have happened before".

The gorgeous pages in the last section are again fully rendered, but the new painting technique Corben used makes them softer, more delicate, and more poetic. Appropriately, it also explores the budding relationship between Kil and Mal. Once their transformation into Den and the Red Queen has started, their roles reverse, and Mal takes care of a wounded Kil. There is, of course, some humor and violence, but it has a soulful, lyrical ending.

The saga of Den will continue in two more upcoming volumes. Since Corben never stopped experimenting, each one of them incorporated new techniques. And the plot will keep twisting and turning, asking more questions than providing answers and introducing many mysteries that will never be resolved. This is the middle point in the multivolume collection; the entire book is a possible origin story, a flashback to the rest of the narrative, and it is one of the most visually inventive graphic novels that he ever created. Corben surprised his many fans by not having Den, Kath, or the Red Queen here, at least not in recognizable forms. Personally, I appreciate his decision to expand the storyline and push the story to unexpected and radical extremes. After all, isn't that what an artist is supposed to do?.

José Villarrubia
Baltimore, July 2023

RESTORING *DEN*

JOSÉ VILLARRUBIA

To be able to restore and bring back to print the very best of Corben's painted comic art has long been a dream of mine. For decades he purposely kept his classic work out of print, and this was due in part to his hesitation that technically it could be reprinted at all. It is well known that Corben used an extremely complicated method to achieve his brilliant colors. He would actually draw and paint his pages with a variety of tools, but in black and white, in a kind of grisaille, like painters have been doing since the time of Giotto. But instead of adding the color directly over the gray tones, Corben decided to make handmade color separations, that is he would paint the magenta, cyan, and yellow films to create full color. That meant that the resulting color would not be visible until it was printed. This mind-boggling method was also influenced by one of Corben's artistic heroes: the illustrator Maxfield Parrish invented a method where he applied thin coats of oil paint in primary colors to a white gessoed board. He would wait for each layer to dry before applying the next, turning them into paintings resembling Cibachrome photographs. The colors were transparent and blended only when layered; for example, a green area would be made by applying cyan paint, letting it dry, and applying yellow paint on top. Corben abstracted and adapted this process and the results were extremely rich and saturated pages that, due to printing limitations of the time, didn't often live up to their full potential. But they were staggering and gorgeous nevertheless.

The color films that were used in the original printings of Corben stories have been almost completely discarded, making new printings challenging. There had been some poor attempts at scanning the work directly from its printed sources, such as *Heavy Metal: The Best of Richard Corben from Creepy and Eerie!* (2001), but the results have been very poor, even inferior to the original printings.

So, a little over a decade ago, I volunteered to restore the edition that Dark Horse did of *Creepy Presents Richard Corben*. Even though the original color separations were long gone, much of the original art in black and white could be located. And here is the thing: looking at the original art, one could see that a lot of detail and texture had been lost on the original editions, in part a result of the color separation method and partly from the less-than-ideal printing. I was certain that with modern reproduction techniques and especially using Photoshop, all the fine detail of the art could be preserved and the brilliant colors brought back to life!

So with Corben's full support, I embarked on restoring the art for the *Creepy* and *Eerie* stories. I also worked on the handful of tales that he did for *Vampirella*, which were reprinted in *Vampirella Archives* volume five. Corben himself and several collectors provided new scans of much of the original art. For color reference, I used the original American printed version, as well as Spanish, French, and some editions from other countries. Each one was a little different, so I had to trust my judgment in how to balance the color and how much to correct them. Some pages that had printed very dark needed a lot of help. Others had one of the color plates over inked and its color would become dominant. And of course, there were many problems with the registration. I spent nearly a year doing this, but the results were worth it. Corben was pleased and that meant the world to me. Later, my friend Laurent Lerner made a new edition and he was able to locate many more originals in France. To this day his *Eerie et Creepy: Intégrale* (2021) is the very best presentation of those stories.

After Corben's sudden passing, the idea of bringing back his classic stories was brought up by his widow, Dona. I immediately volunteered to help out in any way we could, and she

#1 Left: *Grim Wit* #2, page 19. Center and right: revised version from *Metal hurlant*. The original "Den" story was 15 pages long. All the chapters of its continuation for *Neverwhere* and *Muvoum* were 8 pages each. Probably to make it fit with the rest, Corben expanded this page into a two-page sequence, adding a close-up of the woman's face. He also recolored it.

decided that we would start with the best: the entire *Den* saga. After a deal was made with Dark Horse for the *Richard Corben Library*, I began to work on it. I knew that Corben and Dona had not sold the original pages to the Den books. In 2018, I had the great pleasure of examining several of them in the major exhibit of Corben that took place at the Angoulême Comics Festival, where Corben was awarded their grand prize. And they were indeed magnificent! The only exception to this was volume three, the one you hold in your hands. Since Den per se does not appear, most pages were sold. But I was able to collect good-quality scans of all of them.

The Den stories also had the advantage to have been printed better than most in their original editions. That was very helpful to decide what the colors should be in these restored editions. The first volume, *Neverwhere*, printed very well in both of its first editions (the second one contained an extra chapter). The second, *Muvovum*, was a bigger challenge. After much trial and error, I figured that the original first edition (from Catalan Communications), which I considered canon, was simply too light. I had to refer to all the episodes that came out in *Heavy Metal* magazine to get a better sense of what those pages should look like. The result is that for the first time, *Muvovum* looks more "Corben" than it ever has. This third volume was, thankfully, much better printed to begin with. And the end of the book being scanned from fully painted color pages made it even easier.

I have been asked many, many times how exactly I am restoring these pages. The answer is: it depends. For most pages, I use a combination of the values of the original art with a tweaked scan of the printed colors. This can be achieved in Photoshop in several different ways, but typically I follow this method:

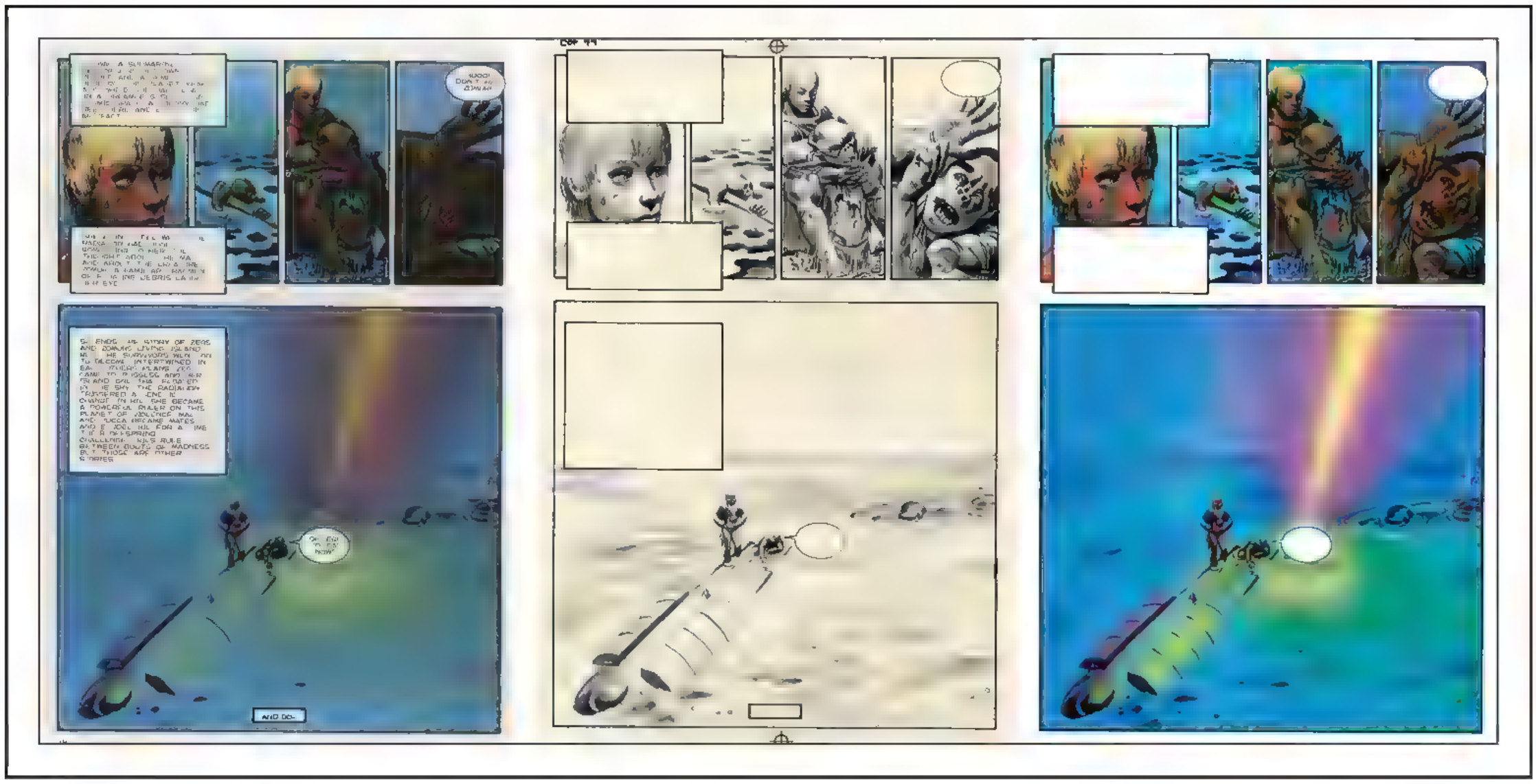
First I set up the line art as the background layer in TIFF format. Then I scan the best page I can find of the colors in very high resolution, at least 700 DPI on RGB mode. I paste the color layer over the line art (layer 1) and resize it so it matches the line art perfectly. This can take a while since sometimes each panel needs to be adjusted individually to fit. Then I make a copy of the color layer (layer 2) and put it right on top. I change the document to CMYK and check each channel of the colors. Using the blur filter, I get rid of the printing dots from the halftone printing as needed. When this is done, I make a copy of the background layer

#2 Left: original art. Center: *Grim Wit* #2, page 23. Right: revised version from *Metal hurlant*. Here you can see how much detail was lost in the first printing on newsprint. For some reason, Corben decided to change the dragon's color. Perhaps due to this change in color, it was later named both Pthalo and Cyan, after the colors phthalo blue and cyan.

(layer 3) and place it on top on "luminosity mode," normally at 50%. I then tweak the values on this layer, comparing them with the intact color layer (layer 1) for accuracy. When the image is more or less ready, I flatten it, make a copy, and open it in channels. Then I manipulate individual channels as needed to match the original printed colors. I also touch up the art at this stage, in case there was any loss of detail anywhere. I save it as a CMYK TIFF file and send it for approval to Dona and the editor, Daniel Chabon.

Each page is, of course, different and this is not the method I always use, but I do a variation of it most of the time on this project. The way I overlap the layers and the modes I use depends widely on the page. Sometimes the values of the colors are established in the black-and-white art and sometimes they are not. Corben would touch up the color plates and sometimes do extra rendering that was not in the original art. This is something that surprised me when I learned it. Also, the method I described is for hand-drawn separations. The colored line art used in the second part of this volume "Shuffled Seeds, Scattered" and that is used in the majority of pages in the next volume require a totally different method, since there are no values established in the original art because there are no grays, just black lines and shapes. And, as I mentioned, one of the chapters of *Neverwhere* and two of the chapters here ("Strange Nativity" and "Promises, Promises") were painted in full color, so the restoration was much more simple and straightforward. This volume also contains a rarity: a restored reprint of the original "Den" story from *Grim Wit* #2 (1972). In this never reprinted version, the colors were printed on newsprint, giving them a very different look due to the implicit desaturation and the warm tone of the paper. To restore this section, and give it the look it had as a comic book, I scanned the comic at very high resolution and then eliminated the halftone dots and touched up the art and colors. If you compare it with the restoration in volume one, *Neverwhere*, you will see that the look is quite distinctive.

I realize that all this technical jargon may not be of much use to nonartists, but I wanted to make sure that, somewhere in the extras in this series, the issue of the restoration was addressed in some detail. I have been very interested in the topic of color reprinting in general, and in the last



#3 Left: Page 48 of the *Den 3: Children of Fire* trade paperback edition. Center: original art. Right: restored art for this edition. As you can see on this page, color often became muddied and details were lost in the previous printings of these stories. Like in this case, shadows often printed too dark, and tints and light values lost some of the detail.

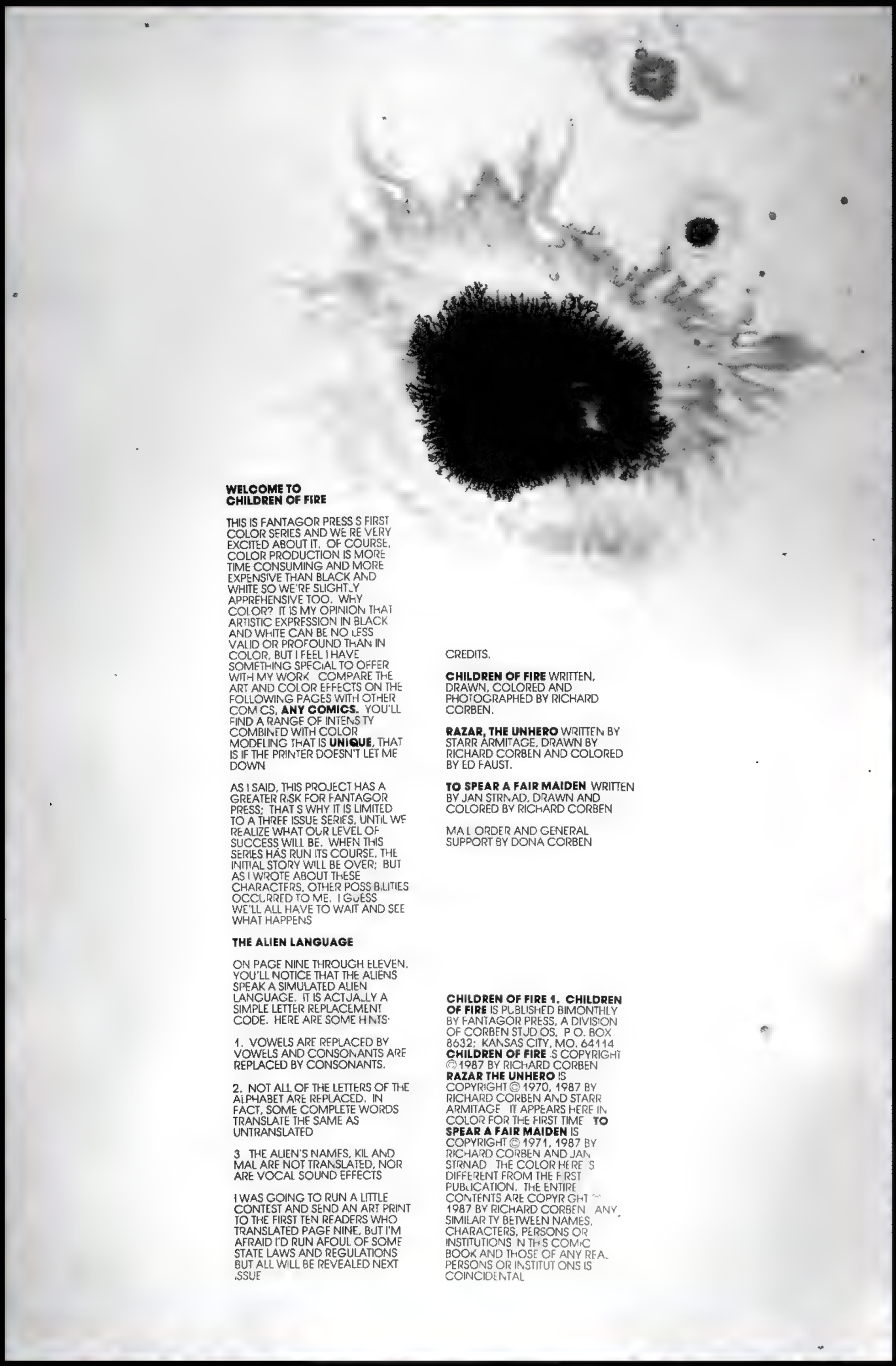
few years started a series of posts in an album on my personal Facebook page that I titled "From a Colorist's Perspective." In it, I showed many examples of comic color reconstruction done right, and, sadly often, not so well. These posts caught the attention of the editors of DC Comics Absolute editions, and they hired me to apply my theories of how newsprint recoloring should be done to one of their upcoming volumes. The result was *Absolute Swamp Thing* by Len Wein and Bernie Wrightson. For the first time, the coloring by Glynis Wein, Tatjana Wood, and Wrightson himself was recreated and I could not be happier with the result.

But the Richard Corben Library is a much greater challenge and, as a result, much more rewarding. In addition to everything else, I consider Richard Corben the greatest color artist who's ever worked in comics, and recovering those colors in the best possible edition brings happiness to my heart that is hard to explain. I dread to think what would have happened if someone like me had not been involved in this project. I imagine they would have simply scanned and cleaned up older printed versions of the stories. Clearly this would have been very unfortunate.

One last note for young and not-so-young artists reading this essay. All the techniques I have developed in my almost thirty years of coloring comics have been my own. When I got started there was not a "how to" book, let alone website, that one could refer to, to learn to color comics, especially if you were looking to mix crisp line art with painterly colors. Likewise, when I started restoring colors, there were no guidelines. This makes it very exciting, like resolving challenges every time you tackle a project. I encourage you to keep developing new techniques in coloring and restoration. Photoshop, which was the only game in town when I started, is now joined by Procreate, Clip Studio Paint, and other programs that keep expanding the possibilities. Digital drawing and painting technologies are growing fast, and there is immense opportunity to utilize them creatively, expressively, and personally.

I very much look forward to seeing what the next few years bring us. When it comes to digital coloring and restoration, as they say, the best is yet to come!

José Villarrubia
Baltimore, July 2023



WELCOME TO CHILDREN OF FIRE

THIS IS FANTAGOR PRESS S FIRST COLOR SERIES AND WE RE VERY EXCITED ABOUT IT. OF COURSE, COLOR PRODUCTION IS MORE TIME CONSUMING AND MORE EXPENSIVE THAN BLACK AND WHITE SO WE'RE SLIGHTLY APPREHENSIVE TOO. WHY COLOR? IT IS MY OPINION THAT ARTISTIC EXPRESSION IN BLACK AND WHITE CAN BE NO LESS VALID OR PROFOUND THAN IN COLOR, BUT I FEEL I HAVE SOMETHING SPECIAL TO OFFER WITH MY WORK. COMPARE THE ART AND COLOR EFFECTS ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES WITH OTHER COM CS, **ANY COMICS.** YOU'LL FIND A RANGE OF INTENS TY COMBINED WITH COLOR MODELING THAT IS **UNIQUE**, THAT IS IF THE PRINTER DOESN'T LET ME DOWN

AS I SAID, THIS PROJECT HAS A GREATER RISK FOR FANTAGOR PRESS; THAT S WHY IT IS LIMITED TO A THREE ISSUE SERIES, UNTIL WE REALIZE WHAT OUR LEVEL OF SUCCESS WILL BE. WHEN THIS SERIES HAS RUN ITS COURSE, THE INITIAL STORY WILL BE OVER; BUT AS I WROTE ABOUT THESE CHARACTERS, OTHER POSS B.LITIES OCCURRED TO ME. I GUESS WE'LL ALL HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS

THE ALIEN LANGUAGE

ON PAGE NINE THROUGH ELEVEN, YOU'LL NOTICE THAT THE ALIENS SPEAK A SIMULATED ALIEN LANGUAGE. IT IS ACTJALLY A SIMPLE LETTER REPLACEMENT CODE. HERE ARE SOME HINTS·

1. VOWELS ARE REPLACED BY VOWELS AND CONSONANTS ARE REPLACED BY CONSONANTS.

2. NOT ALL OF THE LETTERS OF THE ALPHABET ARE REPLACED. IN FACT, SOME COMPLETE WORDS TRANSLATE THE SAME AS UNTRANSLATED

3 THE ALIEN'S NAMES, KIL AND MAL ARE NOT TRANSLATED, NOR ARE VOCAL SOUND EFFECTS

I WAS GOING TO RUN A LITTLE CONTEST AND SEND AN ART PRINT TO THE FIRST TEN READERS WHO TRANSLATED PAGE NINE, BUT I'M AFRAID I'D RUN AFOUL OF SOME STATE LAWS AND REGULATIONS BUT ALL WILL BE REVEALED NEXT .SSUE

CREDITS.

CHILDREN OF FIRE WRITTEN, DRAWN, COLORED AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY RICHARD CORBEN.

RAZAR, THE UNHERO WRITTEN BY STARR ARMITAGE, DRAWN BY RICHARD CORBEN AND COLORED BY ED FAUST.

TO SPEAR A FAIR MAIDEN WRITTEN BY JAN STRNAD, DRAWN AND COLORED BY RICHARD CORBEN

MA L ORDER AND GENERAL SUPPORT BY DONA CORBEN

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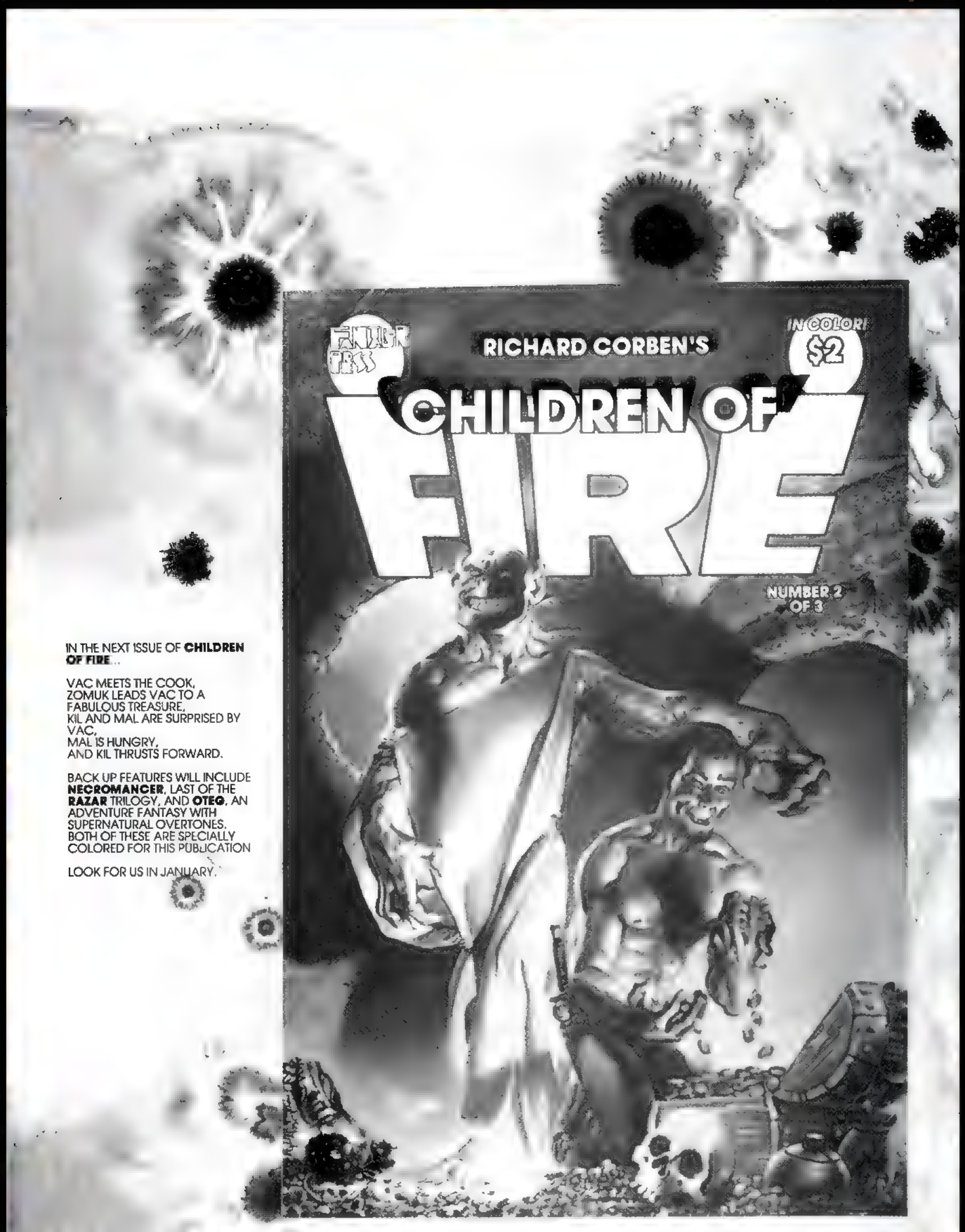
IFC for *Children of Fire* #1 (Fantagor Press)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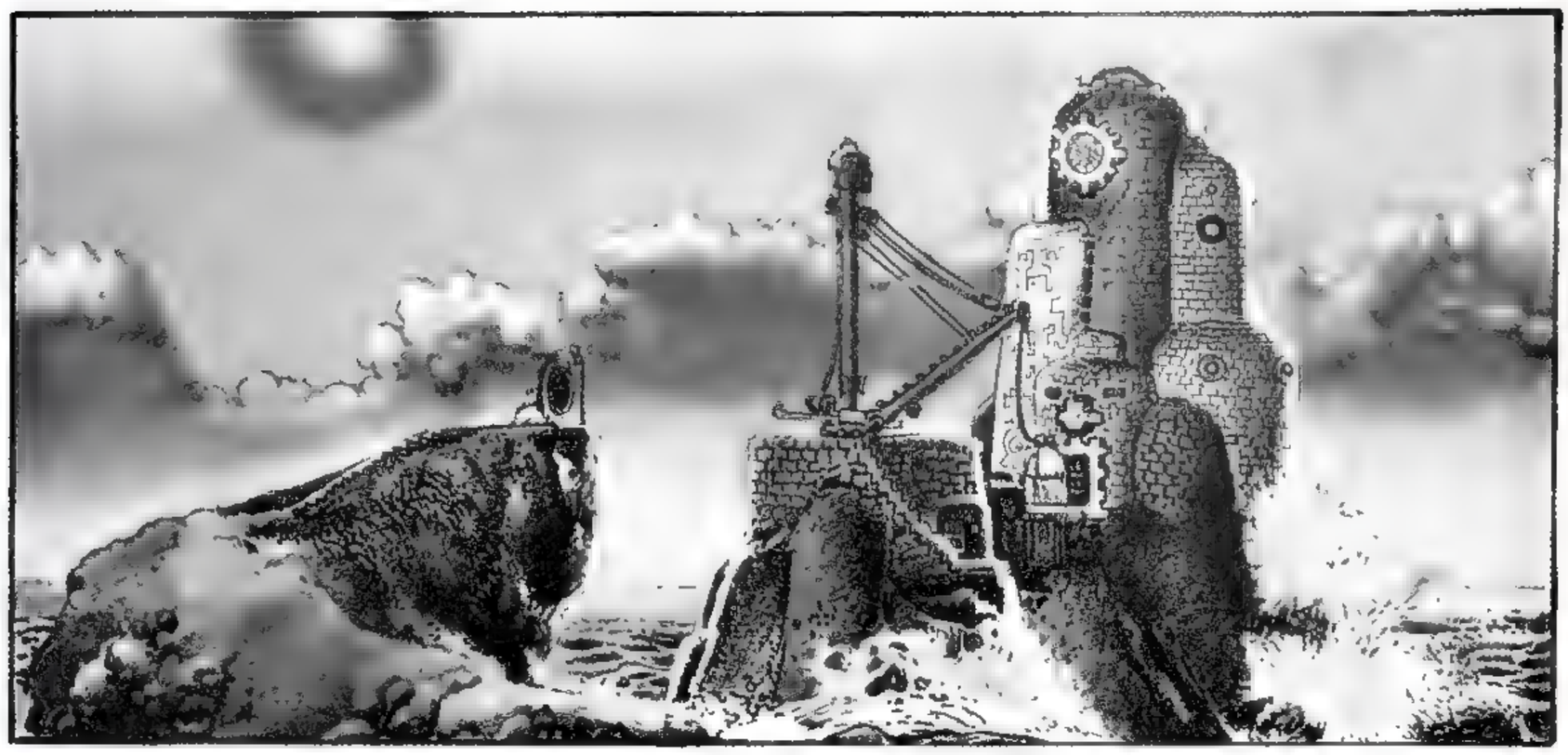
RICHARD CORBEN'S
IN COLOR!
$2
CHILDREN OF FIRE
NUMBER 2 OF 3
IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF CHILDREN OF FIRE...
VAC MEETS THE COOK,
ZOMUK LEADS VAC TO A FABULOUS TREASURE,
KIL AND MAL ARE SURPRISED BY VAC,
MAL IS HUNGRY,
AND KIL THRUSTS FORWARD.
BACK UP FEATURES WILL INCLUDE NECROMANCER, LAST OF THE RAZAR TRILOGY, AND OTEG, AN ADVENTURE FANTASY WITH SUPERNATURAL OVERTONES. BOTH OF THESE ARE SPECIALLY COLORED FOR THIS PUBLICATION
LOOK FOR US IN JANUARY.

Next Issue Advertisement for *Children of Fire* #2 (Fantagor Press)



PUBLISHING COMICS IN 1987

PUBLISHING COMICS IS **GREAT**, .. **IF** YOU CAN PRODUCE A WHOLE COLOR LINE ON A MONTHLY BI-WEEKLY, OR WEEKLY SCHEDULE; **IF** YOU HAVE A DOZEN OR SO CHARACTERS THAT HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED FOR TWENTY YEARS; **IF** YOU HAVE AN INCRED BLY COMPLICATED NETWORK OF CROSSOVERS PLANNED; AND, **IF** RETAILERS WILL ORDER YOUR BOOKS WITHOUT KNOWING OR CARING WHAT'S INSIDE.

BUT WITHOUT SOME OR ANY OF THE FEATURES ABOVE, PUBLISHING COMICS IS **NOT** SO **GREAT.**

SO WHAT? WE LIKE MAKING COMICS. AND WE HOPE YOU LIKE THE COMICS WE MAKE.

CREDITS:

CHILDREN OF FIRE WRITTEN, DRAWN, COLORED AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY RICHARD CORBEN.

NECROMANCER WRITTEN, DRAWN AND COLORED BY RICHARD CORBEN.

OTEQ WRITTEN AND DRAWN BY RICHARD CORBEN. COLORED BY PHILLIP DEWALT.

MAIL ORDER AND GENERAL SUPPORT BY DONA CORBEN.

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HERE'S SOME LETTERS WE RECEIVED ABOUT CHILDREN OF FIRE #1.

DEAR RICHARD AND DONA,

RICHARD, I DON'T KNOW IF YOU EVER HEARD OF ME OR MY SMALL COMICS STUDIO OR ANY OF THE COMICS WE HAVE DONE UP TO THIS POINT. I WAS IN *YELLOW DOG 22*, AND WAS IN *UNDERGROUNDS* A BIT, AND I HAVE A COMPLETE SET OF ALL OLD UNDERGROUNDS. THUS MY *DISAPPOINTMENT*! I SPEND $2.00 LIKE EVERYONE ELSE BUT I GET *OVER, WAY OVER 1/2 REPEATS*! AND WORST OF ALL 18 PAGES OF ADS OF STUFF I ALREADY HAVE, TO 13 *MEASLY NEW PAGES! BOOOOOOO!*

WHAT'S WORSE IS THE *RAZAR* STORY BEING DONE FOR B&W ORIGINALLY, BEING COLORED NOW *IS WAY, WAY TOO DARK*! YOU KNOW IT IS RICHARD, A GUY AS FANTASTIC AS YOU *MUST* KNOW. THIS WAS MY COMPLAINT WITH *RIP IN TIME*. I HAVE *ALL THOSE* BACK UP STORIES TOO, AS DO *MOST OF YOUR FANS*!

MOST OF YOUR REAL FANS HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING YOU SINCE THE EARLY 70'S OR BEFORE AS I HAVE. I GET *EXTREMELY* DISAPPOINTED AND EVEN FEEL RIPPED OFF A BIT WHEN, IN *ALL YOUR NEWER* COMICS TO GET A MINOR 13 PAGE STORY, I MUST BUY 18 PAGES OF *RERUNS*. *TO SPEAR A FAIR MAIDEN* WAS EVEN *IN COLOR*. *FANTAGOR # 1* HAS THE COMPLETE FIRST *RAZAR STORY* AND I DON'T THINK IT'S *THAT* MUCH BETTER IN COLOR WITH A FEW REWRITTEN LINES. *PLEASE RICHARD! NEW MATERIAL*! I WOULD RATHER PAY $3.00-$3.50 FOR A 32 PAGE *ALL NEW CORBEN* COMIC THAN $2.00 FOR A COVER AND 13 PAGES AS I AM NOW! I FEEL BURNT BY THIS RERUN TRIP YOU HAVE MADE US BUY. *RICHARD*, LOOK I WOULD HAVE RATHER WRITTEN THIS LETTER TO TELL YOU THAT YOU'RE THE BEST COLORIST AND AIRBRUSH USER OF THE 70'S AND 80'S, AND THAT YOUR WRITING IS VERY FUN AND GREAT, AND THAT YOU SHOULD DO *BOTH* COLOR AND B&W COMICS *AT THE SAME TIME*! HAVE A SET OF B&W COMICS RUNNING AND COLOR ONES IF YOU CAN. GET A GOOD ASSISTANT TO WORK WITH YOU AND DO ALL YOUR LABORS LIKE ERASING AND SO FORTH.

PLEASE RICHARD, IF *ANYTHING* KEEPS ME FROM NOT BUYING THE *REMAINING* 2 ISSUES, IT WILL BE THAT I HAVE *BOUGHT* THE BACK UP STORIES YOU ARE PUTTING IN #2, ONE IN *GRIM WIT* FROM *RIP OFF PRESS* AND *FANTAGOR'S #1-2*.

OOPS, MAYBE I DON'T HAVE *OTEQ*, I *HOPE* I DON'T. BUT *PLEASE* DON'T USE THE STORIES IN *ANOMALLY* OR *FEVER DREAMS*! OR *ANY* OF YOUR OLDER STUFF. AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, YOU *DETRACT* FROM YOUR OLD STUFF BY REPRINTING IT AND MAKING IT SO YOU CAN GET IT IN *NEW* COMICS. LOTS OF US WORKED VERY HARD TO COLLECT YOUR ARTWORK, CHECKING THROUGH *MOUNTAINS* OF *UNDERGROUNDS* (IN THE 60'S AND EARLY 70'S) TO FIND 6-8 PAGES OF *YOUR WORK*! OFTEN YOUR ARTWORK WAS THE ONLY SAVING GRACE IN THE *WHOLE COMIC*! AND NOW, THESE OLD CLASSICS ARE BEING BASTARDIZED (TO ME) AND REUSED ENMASSE AS OVER 1/2 OF YOUR *NEW COMICS*! *PLEASE LET THE B&W OF THE PAST B&W*! I FEEL YOU ARE DOING THE SAME *EXACT THING* THAT *TED TURNER* HAS DONE WITH THE *MALTESE FALCON* AND OTHER CLASSIC B&W MOVIES, COLORING THEM WITH COMPUTER. WELL, YOU'RE NOT THAT BAD, BUT YOU SHOW *MORE REPEATS THAN HIS CHANNEL*, *TBS*!

CRAIG A. STORMON
BLUE COMET PRESS
MANHATTAN BEACH, CA.

CRAIG, AS A PUBLISHER YOURSELF, YOU MUST REALIZE THE BUSINESS WE'RE IN IS LIKE ALL BUSINESS. OUR COMIC MUST BE SUCCESSFUL OR IT CAN'T CONTINUE. FOR ME THAT MEANS CUTTING OVERHEAD EXPENSES WHEREVER POSSIBLE WITHOUT DEGRADING THE ARTISTIC QUALITY TOO MUCH, AND STILL GET THE BOOK PUBLISHED ON SCHEDULE. DECISIONS ARE MADE EVERY DAY WHERE INTEGRITY AND ECONOMY ARE IN APPARENT CONFLICT. I GUESS YOUR COMPLAINTS ARE MAINLY ABOUT THE USE OF OLD REPRINTED FEATURES AS BACK UPS AND THE COLORING OF FORMERLY BLACK AND WHITE STRIPS.

I WOULD LOVE TO DO A COMIC OF ALL NEW MATERIAL, BUT I KNOW I COULDN'T PRODUCE SUCH A BOOK ON A BI-MONTHLY SCHEDULE. SEE, I DO TRY TO MAINTAIN ARTISTIC INTEGRITY IN SOME WAYS. AS A PUBLISHER, YOU KNOW THERE IS A CORRELATION OF SALES TO PUBLISHING FREQUENCY. QUARTERLY COMICS AND "ONE SHOTS" WOULD BE SUICIDE FOR ME. SO THE CHOICE IS NARROWED TO USING REPRINTS OR ANOTHER CARTOONIST. THERE WILL BE OTHER ARTISTS IN FANTAGOR COMICS EVENTUALLY, BUT FOR NOW, THE ARTISTS I WOULD CHOOSE ARE BEYOND OUR BUDGET. SO I USE REPRINTS. I TRY TO PICK ONES THAT HAVE THE LEAST EXPOSURE AND I KNOW THE ORIGINAL PRINT RUNS OF THE UNDERGROUND FANTAGOR'S WAS UNDER 10,000. THIS NEW PUBLICATION WILL REACH APPROXIMATELY TWICE THAT NUMBER. FOR THE READERS, LIKE YOU, WHO FEEL CHEATED, I TRIED TO ADD SOMETHING NEW: COLOR.

SOME ARTISTS HAVE A HARD TIME "FINISHING" A WORK. NOT JUST PICTORIAL ARTISTS, BUT COMPOSERS, WRITERS, DANCERS, SCULPTORS, OCCASIONALLY GO BACK AND REWORK OLD PIECES. THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH THIS. YOUR CRITICISM ABOUT COLORING AN OLD STRIP WOULD ONLY HAVE MERIT IF I DID A POOR JOB OF IT. RAZAR THE UNHERO WAS NOT TOO DARK IN COLOR. YOU MIGHT BE MORE JUSTIFIED IN SAYING THE BLACK AND WHITE VERSION WAS TOO DARK. TO SPEAR A FAIR MAIDEN MIGHT BE A LITTLE DARK BUT THIS IS BECAUSE OF A SPECIAL ENGRAVING TECHNIQUE USED ON IT. I MADE A FULL COLOR OVERLAY FOR EACH PAGE, SHOT TRANSPARENCIES OF THE OVERLAY AND THE TONAL ART, SANDWICHED THEM TOGETHER AND SENT THEM TO BE LASER SCANNED. NECROMANCER IN THIS ISSUE ALSO USES THE SAME TECHNIQUE BUT I HOPE IT COMES OUT BETTER.

LETTERS CONTINUED ON THE INSIDE BACK COVER

Letters Page from *Children of Fire* #2 (Fantagor Press), Page 1

LETTERS CONTINUED FROM THE INSIDE FRONT COVER.

DEAR CORBENS,

CONGRATS ON *CHILDREN OF FIRE* SERIES. SOME CHARACTERS AND SETTINGS ARE FAMILIAR. THE COLOR IS GREAT AS USUAL. ONE THING THOUGH, HALF OF THE BOOK IS "ORIGINAL", THE OTHER IS "REPRINT". THE ENDING LEAVES ONE HANGING JUST LIKE THE OLD *HEAVY METAL* INSTALLMENTS.

BRAVO ON THE PRINTS ADVERTISED ON THE COVERS OF THE *RIP IN TIME* SERIES, *LABYRINTH* AND *UNDER THE OAK*. IMPRESSIVE!

ROUGH ESTIMATE INDICATES *C OF F* WILL BE AROUND 40-50 PAGES LONG. HINT MAYBE AFTER THE *C.OF F* SERIES; A FRESH, NEVER BEFORE SEEN 50 PAGE FULL COLOR GRAPHIC NOVEL. POSSIBLE? *MUTANT WORLD* NEEDS A COMPANION. MAYBE A PORTFOLIO? I THINK *FANTAGOR PRESS'S* TIME HAS COME.

ASIDE FROM POPULAR GRAPHIC NOVELS OR "REPRINTED" COMIC (ABOVE GROUND) WORK PUT TOGETHER IN ONE PACKAGE, THE MAJORITY OF COMICS AVAILABLE ARE *JUNK* (SAD TO SAY BUT TRUE.)

BACK ISSUES WERE MY MAIN SOURCE, SUCH AS *ECLIPSE'S NIGHT MUSIC, STAR REACH CLASSICS, PACIFIC'S DEMON DREAMS, MS MYSTIC, RAVENS AND RAINBOWS*, ETC.

THE TIME IS RIPE. YOUR TIME HAS COME.

D. GARZA
WASHINGTON

P.S. WHERE IS *DEN*?

I'VE ALREADY ANSWERED SOME OF YOUR COMMENTS ON THE PREVIOUS LETTER EXCEPT,... IF SOME OF THE CHARACTERS ARE FAMILIAR, I HAVE A REASON WHICH WILL BE REVEALED LATER.

AN ALL NEW 50 PAGE COLOR GRAPHIC NOVEL? IMPOSSIBLE! IN 1982, WE SAVED UP OUR MONEY AND SPENT SIX MONTHS PRODUCING JEREMY BROOD. IT FLOPPED! WELL, NOT COMPLETELY, BUT WE WERE BURNED IN OUR BUSINESS DEALINGS. I WOULD LIKE TO DO A PORTFOLIO BUT I DON'T THINK IT WOULD SELL WELL ENOUGH.

DEN IS IN UNKNOWN TERRITORY FOR NOW. BEFORE I HAD A FALLING OUT WITH HEAVY METAL, I WROTE TWO DEN STORIES WHICH ARE NOW ON THE SHELF. (SIGH!)

DEAR MR CORBEN,

I HAVE ADMIRED YOUR WORK FOR YEARS. EVEN IF YOU AREN'T HAVING A CONTEST, IT WAS FUN DECIPHERING YOUR CODE.

ONE SMALL NOTE. THE WORD, WARRIOR, IS SPELLED WRONG ON PAGE TEN. KEEP UP THE GREAT WORK. I AGREE THAT BLACK AND WHITE OR COLOR ARE BOTH GOOD MEDIUMS. BUT I MUST SAY I LIKE THE COLORING JOB ON YOUR WORK.

MICHAEL SCRUGGS
FERNDALE, WA.

ME, MISSPELL A WORD? IT CAN'T BE. ALAS, THE TRUTH IS OUT. DONA PROOFREADS AND CORRECTS EVERYTHING, BUT THE CODE WAS "TOP SECRET" AND SHE NEVER SAW IT UNTIL AFTER IT WAS PRINTED.

MR. CORBEN,

SWITCHING T AND H MAKES FOR SOME WEIRD SOUNDS AND YOU SPELLED WARRIORS WRONG BUT OTHERWISE THIS IS REAL COOL.

CRAIG MAHER
POUGHKEEPSIE, N.Y.

ALL RIGHT ALREADY, I MISSPELLED A WORD.

DEAR MR. CORBEN,

#1 OF *CHILDREN OF FIRE* IS GREAT-I'M IN FOR THE WHOLE SERIES-KEEP IT GOING-THE REPRINTS ARE GREAT! I HAD NEVER SEEN EITHER OF THOSE PIECES BEFORE. THE PRINTER DEFINITELY DIDN'T LET YOU DOWN THIS TIME. I AM A HARD-CORE CORBEN FAN (HARD CORBEN?)

I LOVE ALL YOUR STUFF AND I WILL SUPPORT ANY PROJECT YOU WANT TO TAKE ON. THE COLOR IS WORTH THE SLIGHT EXTRA CHARGE-NO TWO WAYS ABOUT IT. IN FACT, IF YOU WANT TO REPRINT *RIP IN TIME* IN COLOR, I'LL BUY IT ALL OVER AGAIN.

VIC AND BLOOD IS EXCELLENT ALSO MR. ELLISON'S SCRIPT COMPLIMENTS YOUR ARTWORK VERY WELL, AS DOES JAN STRNAD'S IN THE LAST STORY IN *C OF F*.

I'M SICK OF BLACK AND WHITE COMICS AND I DON'T CARE WHO KNOWS IT ANYONE WHO SAW ALL 3 ISSUES OF *DINOSAUR REX* (#1 IN COLOR, 2&3 IN B&W) OR WHO COMPARES STRNAD & FUJITAKE'S *"DALGODA"* WITH THEIR NEW COMIC, *"RETIEF,"* WOULD HAVE TO BE BLIND TO SAY THAT COLOR DOESN'T ADD ANOTHER WHOLE DIMENSION TO ANY GOOD COMIC.

ENOUGH RANTING-KEEP THE GREAT WORK COMING-IN COLOR-AND I'LL KEEP BUYING THEM.

F.J. HANNON
BOSTON, MASS.

I PRAY FOR ABOUT 50,000 MORE READERS LIKE YOU F.J.

THE FAMOUS ALIEN LANGUAGE CODE

THE LETTER REPLACEMENT CODE USED IN **CHILDREN OF FIRE #1** AND THIS ISSUE TO PORTRAY THE LANGUAGE OF KIL AND MAL WENT LIKE THIS:

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
U Z Y X E W V T O J R Q P N I M L K S H A G F D C B

AND HERE IS THE TRANSLATION BEGINNING WITH PAGE 9 OF **CHILDREN OF FIRE #1**

PAGE 9

KIL. WAKE UP MAL.

MAL. EERK! COUGH! COUGH!

MAL. F-FOOD.

MAL. SENSE DANGER.

KIL. DO YOURSELF A FAVOR DUDE. LEAVE US ALONE

KIL. YOU'RE MAKING A BIG MISTAKE!

PAGE 10

MAL. YOU ARE ONE OF THE WARRIORS. A KIL DID THE PROTOQUEEN SURVIVE? DID ANY EGGS SURVIVE?

KIL. MAL... I. I SAW SOME RUPTURED ONES. I FEAR MANY ARE BEING EATEN BY THE NATIVE LIFE FORMS.

MAL: I SENSE SOME NEARBY NOT IN THE WATER

KIL. THEN WE MUST FIND THEM.

PAGE 11

MAL. KIL IT'S NO USE! **DAMN THE LUCK!** AND DAMN THE CREATURES OF THIS WORLD!

KIL. NO, A SEA FORM INTERVENED WHEN WE WERE ATTACKED UNDERWATER. AND IT BORE US TO THE SHORE

KIL. WHAT IS THIS?

MAL. **YOU FOOL!** IT'S THE **POWER** SECTION OF OUR SPACE SHIP IT'S EMITTING **LETHAL RADIATION!**

MAL. **GREAT!** WE'LL EITHER DIE OF EXPOSURE, STARVATION OR **RADIATION!**

SO MUCH FOR OUR NEW COLONY

OUR CHANCES HAVE SLIPPED FROM **SLIM** TO **NONE!**

KIL. WE ARE ALIVE...AND UNTIL WE'RE DEAD, WE HAVE A PURPOSE

SUCH TALK DESTROYS OUR WILL.

KIL. I'M SORRY I STRUCK YOU, MAL.

MAL. HMF!

THIS ISSUE, PAGE 5

MAL. I THINK THERE ARE SEVERAL EGGS LEFT THEY'RE IN THIS BUILDING.

TRY TO RESTRAIN YOUR MARTIAL TENDENCIES. WE MIGHT RETRIEVE THEM PEACEFULLY

PAGE 6

MAL. I'M TOO WEAK TO MAKE THE JUMP

MAL. I SMELL FOOD

I'M HUNGRY

PAGE 7

MAL. I'M SO WEAK AND TIRED.

MAL. I'LL NEVER MAKE IT

MAL. **FOOD!**

PAGE 10

MAL: HAVE YOU FOOD?

MAL. PLEASE GIVE ME FOOD

MAL. OH, YOU'RE A SAINT YOU'VE SAVED MY LIFE.

MAL. I'M AFRAID MY FRIEND, KIL, IS ON A DOOMED ERRAND ABOVE. I SENSE THE EGGS ARE BEING QUICKLY EXTINGUISHED, ONE BY ONE

YOU AND MUST ESCAPE.

PAGE 12

MAL. DANGER!

THAT'S ALL FOR NOW. CATCH US IN MARCH WITH NUMBER 3. KIL AND ZOMUK RESORT TO VIOLENCE (AS IF YOU COULDN'T GUESS), MAL AND THE COOK TRY TO ESCAPE AND THERE'S BIG TROUBLE ON THE LITTLE ISLAND. THE BACK UP FEATURE WILL BE TO MEET THE FACES YOU MEET. SORRY, CRAIG.

ORDER ALL THREE - $6.00 POSTAGE PAID.

Letters Page from *Children of Fire* #2 (Fantagor Press), Page 2

A TEDIOUS END TO TEDIOUS COLORING.

BECAUSE OF ILLNESS BEGINNING CHRISTMAS (WHAT A WAY TO SPEND THE HOLIDAYS!), SOME ADDITIONAL WORK INCLUDING THE SECOND ISSUE OF **VIC AND BLOOD** FOR MAD DOG GRAPHICS, AND THE EXTRA LENGTH OF THIS CHAPTER, THIS FINAL ISSUE OF **CHILDREN OF FIRE** IS PROBABLY A COUPLE WEEKS LATE. THE COLORING TECHNIQUE USED ON **CHILDREN OF FIRE** AND VIRTUALLY ALL THE COLOR COMICS I'VE DONE IN THE LAST FIFTEEN YEARS IS ONE I DEVELOPED MYSELF AND IS EXTREMELY **TEDIOUS**. THE PURPOSE OF THIS TECHNIQUE WAS TO CREATE BRIGHTLY COLORED COMICS **BUT** WITH A FULL RANGE OF MODELING EFFECTS. IT HAD TO BE FASTER AND LESS EXPENSIVE THAN FULL COLOR OIL PAINTING. IT CONSISTS OF A FOUR LAYERED OVERLAY FOR EACH INK COLOR THAT IS PHOTOGRAPHED OVER A CONTINUOUS TONE ORIGINAL ARTWORK. NO REGULAR PHOTOENGRAVER COULD COPE WITH TRANSLATING THIS MASSIVE STACK OF ACETATE INTO FILM SEPARATIONS, SO HAD TO DO THIS CHORE ALSO, ON THE CORBEN COPY CAMERA. IT WORKED WELL, BUT NOW I'VE COME TO A POINT WHERE IT'S OUTLIVED ITS USEFULNESS. I'M TIRED OF THE LONG HOURS OF MAKING COLOR OVERLAYS, OF NOT BEING ABLE TO SEE IF THE COLOR COMPOSITION WORKED UNTIL AFTER A PROOF IS MADE, AND OF BEING THE SLOWEST OF THE COMIC BOOK ARTISTS. SO, IT'S TIME FOR A CHANGE. THE NEXT CORBEN COMIC WILL UTILIZE A MORE STANDARD AND FASTER ART AND COLORING STYLE. I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO IT. I HOPE YOU LIKE IT.

CREDITS:

CHILDREN OF FIRE WRITTEN, DRAWN, COLORED AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY RICHARD CORBEN.

KITTENS FOR CHRISTIAN WRITTEN BY JAN STRNAD, DRAWN BY RICHARD CORBEN WITH PRIMITIVE COLOR BY ZIPATONE OVERLAYS.

MAIL ORDER AND GENERAL SUPPORT BY DONA CORBEN

CHILDREN OF FIRE 3 **CHILDREN OF FIRE** HAS BEEN PUBLISHED BIMONTHLY BY FANTAGOR PRESS, A DIVISION OF CORBEN STUDIOS; P.O. BOX 8632; KANSAS CITY, MO 64114. **CHILDREN OF FIRE 3** IS COPYRIGHT © 1988 BY RICHARD CORBEN. **KITTENS FOR CHRISTIAN** IS COPYRIGHT © 1972 BY JAN STRNAD AND RICHARD CORBEN. IT WAS FIRST PUBLISHED IN **FANTAGOR 3**. THIS VERSION IS IDENTICAL EXCEPT FOR THE BETTER PAPER THE ENTIRE CONTENTS ARE COPYRIGHT © 1988 BY RICHARD CORBEN. ANY SIMILARITY BETWEEN NAMES, CHARACTERS, PERSONS OR INSTITUTIONS IN THIS COMIC BOOK AND THOSE OF ANY REAL PERSONS OR INSTITUTIONS IS COINCIDENTAL.

HERE'S SOME LETTERS.

DEAR AIRBRUSH KING:

YOU KNOW, YOU'RE STUFF GETS BETTER AND BETTER AND **CHILDREN OF FIRE 2** SHOWS IT. THE CLARITY OF YOUR IMAGES HAS EVEN IMPROVED FROM THE FIRST ISSUE. I'M AFRAID, HOWEVER, THAT I HAVE TO AGREE WITH MR STORMON ABOUT YOUR BACK UP FEATURES BEING TOO DARK. THEY WERE A LITTLE BETTER THAN THE FIRST ISSUE, BUT JUST LOOK AT THE BLACK AND WHITE VERSIONS AND IT'S AMAZING HOW MUCH DIFFERENCE THERE IS. THE BEST (OR WORST) EXAMPLE IS THE FIRST RAZAR STORY FROM THE FIRST ISSUE OF **CHILDREN OF FIRE**. I'M SORRY, BUT THAT'S WAY TOO DARK COMPARED TO THE BLACK AND WHITE. I DON'T KNOW WHY I'M NAGGING YOU ABOUT IT, BUT I DO KNOW YOU'RE CAPABLE OF A BETTER PRODUCT.

BACK TO **CHILDREN OF FIRE** THOUGH, I LIKE IT! I'M KIND OF TIRED OF SEEING THAT WEIRD WIZARD MIDGET IN HALF YOUR WORK, BUT THE WORK ON PUCCA AND THE TWO ALIENS IS SUPERB. YOU SEEM TO HAVE FIGURED OUT HOW TO PUT THE MOST IN YOUR CHARACTERS AS FAR AS REALISM GOES. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY ABOUT THE STORY. IT SEEMS KIND OF POINTLESS, BUT I SEE IT MORE AS AN OBSTACLE TO YOUR GREAT ART.

DEN WAS MENTIONED IN THE LETTER'S COLUMN AND I'M GLAD TO KNOW YOU HAD WRITTEN MORE STORIES ABOUT HIM. THIS IS YOUR CHANCE! HOW ABOUT "TALES OF NEVERWHERE", A REGULAR COMIC BOOK PUT OUT ON A REGULAR BASIS WITH NEW PERVERTED ADVENTURES! I HAVE NOTHING AGAINST YOUR NEW BOOKS NOT HAVING A LOT OF GRAPHIC SEX, NUDITY AND VIOLENCE; BUT, AS I THINK YOU KNOW, DEN WOULD BE, SHALL WE SAY, NAKED WITHOUT THEM. IT'S WHAT MAKES IT MORE APPEALING IN SOME WAYS. PLEASE CONSIDER IT. I THINK IT WOULD BE WELL WORTH THE EFFORT. I WAS EVEN THINKING YOU COULD TRY IT IN PEN AND INK DRAWINGS WITH A MINIMAL AIRBRUSH OVERLAY. THIS WAY YOU COULD CONCENTRATE ON LAYOUT AND DETAIL IN YOUR INKING, PLUS BEING ABLE TO PUT IT OUT FASTER.

WELL, I'D LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR PUTTING OUT SUCH QUALITY WORK IN YOUR YEARS AND SYMPATHIZING FOR WHAT MUST BE A PAINSTAKING PROCESS. ALL THE BEST LUCK IS SENT TO YOU AND FANTAGOR. SAY HI TO GURGY FOR ME.

PAUL LITTELL
NORMAN, OK.

PAUL, YOU'VE BEEN READING MY MIND! SEE THE BACK COVER FOR AN AD ANNOUNCING THE NEXT FANTAGOR COMIC. THE FOLLOWING LETTERS ARE ALSO CONCERNED BY CORBEN'S "TOO DARK" IMAGES

RICH:

MR. STORMAN'S LETTER IN #2 RAISES SOME POINTS OF INTEREST. I DO NOT LIKE REPRINTS EITHER - BUT I AGREE WITH YOUR USE OF THEM TO MAINTAIN THE ARTISTIC INTEGRITY OF THE BOOK. I HATE HAVING A WORTHLESS BACKUP STORY MORE THAN I DISLIKE GOOD REPRINTS. I MUST AGREE WITH HIM THAT THE COLORIZED REPRINTS ARE TOO DARK - OR ARE THE SCENES TAKING PLACE AT NIGHT? I WOULD ENJOY A LITTLE MORE BRIGHTNESS.

FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH... DO NOT ENJOY THE "FOREIGN LANGLAGE" OF THE ALIENS. I ENJOY STORIES IN CLEAR-CUT ENGLISH.

MIKE LOVINGER
LAS VEGAS, NEV.

DEAR RICHARD,

AS TO YOUR FULL COLOR BOOK, IT LOOKS GOOD, THOUGH I HAD MY OBJECTIONS... **CHILDREN OF FIRE** DID NOTHING FOR ME AS I DON'T KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT THE CHARACTERS OR WHAT'S GOING ON TO GET INVOLVED IN THE STORY. MAYBE NEXT ISSUE. OF COURSE, OLD ZEG AND ZOMUK ARE FAMILIAR CHARACTERS. I'M INTERESTED IN SEEING WHAT DEVELOPS THERE (IS THIS NEVERWHERE? THAT DOES LOOK LIKE A NAR STONE). **RAZAR** WAS THE WORST THING IN THE BOOK. I WISH TO GOSH THESE PRINTERS WOULD DO IT'S HALF TONE RIGHT. I'VE NEVER SEEN THIS PRINTED PROPERLY SINCE YOUR FIRST **FANTAGOR** ISSUE YOU DID YOURSELF. THIS TIME IT REALLY WENT MUDDY. INSTEAD OF SOFT AIRBRUSHED TONES, IT LOOKED LIKE INK SMEARED ON WITH Q-TIPS. THE COLOR ONLY HELPED DARKEN IT MORE. I COULDN'T TELL WHAT THE HELL WAS GOING ON IN MOST OF THE PANELS. **TO SPEAR A FAIR MAIDEN** I LIKED BEST THIS ISSUE. THE COLOR WAS AN IMPROVEMENT OVER ITS FIRST APPEARANCE AND YOUR "COVERING" UP OF THE VITAL PARTS WAS WELL DONE THIS TIME.

HOPEFULLY, MORE WILL BE REVEALED ON **CHILDREN OF FIRE** NEXT ISSUE. I JUST COULDN'T GET INTO IT... IT SEEMED TO HAVE A BEGINNING AND MIDDLE, BUT NO CONCLUSION. I REALIZE THESE STORIES ARE CONTINUATIONS, BUT YOUR **RIP IN TIME** SERIES SEEMED SELF-CONTAINED IN EACH ISSUE. THEY COULD STAND ON THEIR OWN IF THEY HAD TO. **CHILDREN**, IN THIS FIRST ISSUE, SEEMS TO NEED THE OTHERS TO HELP IT STAND UP. OF COURSE, ONE THING THAT KEPT ME FROM GETTING INTO THE CHARACTERS IS THAT ALIEN DIALOGUE...I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT. BUT THEN AGAIN, YOU DID GIVE A LINGUISTIC KEY TO IT DIDN'T YOU?

HERB ARNOLD
KANSAS CITY, KS.

FROM THE BEGINNING OF MY CAREER, I'VE ALWAYS BEEN PLAGUED BY COMPLAINTS ABOUT MY DARK DRAWINGS AND PAINTINGS. FOR YEARS, I THOUGHT THIS WAS A PROBLEM WITH MY SKILLS. BUT NOW I KNOW THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH MY SKILLS; I REALLY HAVE A **DARK VISION**. WHEN I'M WORKING ON A PAINTING OR COMIC PAGE, I DON'T STOP UNTIL I'VE ACHIEVED THAT DARK MOOD WITH DARK DETAILS. MANY VIEWERS DON'T LOOK INTO THE DARKNESS THAT CONTAINS THE "MEAT" OF THE PIECE. SPECIFICALLY, THE FIRST PRINTING OF **RAZAR THE UNHERO** WAS PHOTOENGRAVED SO THE DETAILS MOVED INTO A HIGHER RANGE WHICH WAS APPARENTLY EASIER FOR MOST PEOPLE TO "READ". BUT UNFORTUNATELY, THIS ALSO BROUGHT THE ARTS SOLID BLACK AREAS UP SO THAT THEY WERE RENDERED AS DARK GREY, RATHER THAN SOLID BLACK. FROM MY POINT OF VIEW, THIS IS A FLAW. WHEN **RAZAR THE UNHERO** WAS REDONE IN COLOR, I DID THE PHOTOENGRAVING MYSELF AND I MADE SURE THE BLACK AREAS PRINTED JUST AS BLACK AS IS POSSIBLE WITH THE PROCESS USED. THE DETAILS ARE STILL THERE; THEY ARE JUST VERY DARK.

IN CORBEN'S WORLD, IT IS ALWAYS EVENING, NIGHT OR MORNING. MIDDAY IS USUALLY SKIPPED OVER BRIEFLY.

CRAIG STORMON'S LETTER IN CHILDREN OF FIRE 2 CREATED A "STORM" OF LETTERS FROM OTHER READERS EITHER AGREEING OR DISAGREEING WITH HIS POINTS ON DARK IMAGES AND REPRINTS TOO ..

LETTERS CONTINUED ON INSIDE BACK COVER.

Letters Page from *Children of Fire* #3 (Fantagor Press), Page 1

LETTERS CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER.

DEAR CORBEN

I THINK **RIP IN TIME** ROCKED! I ALSO LOVE **CHILDREN OF FIRE.** AND, I THINK THESE COLOR CORBEN COMICS ARE REALLY FIRST-CLASS! I ALSO HAVE AN EXTENSIVE "CORBEN LIBRARY" OF LOTS OF YOUR OLDER AND NEWER STUFF I'VE BEEN A FAN FOR SOME TIME. I DISAGREE WITH CRAIG STORMON BECAUSE I THINK YOU SHOULD REPRINT AS MUCH STUFF AS POSSIBLE! I THINK IT CAN ONLY HELP BECAUSE THEN EVERYONE WILL KNOW WHAT A SUPERIOR ARTIST YOU ARE! (ALSO, THERE'S SOME STUFF I'M SURE I MIGHT NEVER SEE OTHERWISE!) AS LONG AS YOU KEEP PUTTING YOUR ARTWORK OUT, I'LL KEEP BUYING IT!

KEEP UP THE GREAT WORK!

DAWSON CHASTAIN
MORGANTOWN, W VA.

P.S. WHY DID YOU SIGN YOUR NAME "CORBAY" ON THE COVER OF **1984 #2**?

CORBAY IS A COMBINATION OF CORBEN AND DUBAY. BILL DUBAY WAS THE EDITOR OF 1984 AND HE DID A COMPOSITIONAL SKETCH FOR THE COVER.

DEAR MR. CORBEN:

I SUPPOSE THAT YOU PRINTED MR. STORMON'S LETTER IN **CHILDREN OF FIRE #2** TO SEE WHAT RESPONSE IT WOULD GET. WELL, IT SURE GOT A RESPONSE FROM ME.

MR. STORMON EXPRESSED HIS GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT THAT SO MANY OF YOUR RECENT COMICS REPRINT WORKS THAT PREVIOUSLY APPEARED IN UNDERGROUND COMICS. HE SAYS HE ALREADY HAS ALL OF THE BACK UP STORIES, "AS DO MOST OF YOUR FANS." I'M ONE OF THE FANS THAT HAS MOST OF THOSE UNDERGROUNDS, AND I CERTAINLY HOPE THAT HE IS WRONG. I HOPE THAT THE NUMBER OF "MOST OF YOUR FANS" IS NOT LIMITED TO PEOPLE WHO A) WERE COMICS-CONSCIOUS FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, B) HAD THE FORESIGHT TO BUY UNDERGROUNDS AND C) THE GOOD SENSE TO HOLD ONTO THEM. I AM ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE AND I AM DELIGHTED THAT YOUR BEST STORIES ARE BEING REPRINTED. I WANT YOU TO BE PUT IN FRONT OF NEWER AND LARGER AUDIENCES. THERE'S A LOT OF YOUR PREVIOUS WORK THAT IS HARD FOR PEOPLE NEW TO CORBEN TO LOCATE NOWADAYS. I DON'T WANT PEOPLE THAT ENJOY YOUR WORK TO BE LIMITED TO THE ONES WHO'VE ALREADY SEEN IT BEFORE. THE UNDERGROUND AUDIENCE WASN'T ALL THAT LARGE FIFTEEN YEARS AGO. TO SAY THAT "MOST OF YOUR FANS" ARE MERELY THE SURVIVORS OF THAT SMALL GROUP IS, I FEEL, AN INSULT TO THE WIDE AUDIENCE YOU ARE ENTITLED TO.

MR. STORMON SAYS HE HAS A "COMPLETE SET OF ALL OLD UNDERGROUNDS" AND WHINES THAT SOME OF IT IS BEING REPEATED. I WONDER HOW EDGAR ALLEN POE WOULD REACT TO A COMPLAINT THAT HIS STORIES WERE BEING REPRINTED FOR WIDER PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT AND APPRECIATION WHEN THEY'D ALREADY PRINTED ONCE IN RARE FIRST EDITIONS. I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE THERE WHEN YOUR STORIES FIRST APPEARED. I ENJOYED THEM A LOT AND I'M GLAD OTHERS ARE GETTING A FRESH CHANCE TO ENJOY THEM TOO.

I SUSPECT THAT MANY OF YOUR STORIES WOULD HAVE APPEARED IN COLOR IN THE FIRST PLACE IF ECONOMICS AND OPPORTUNITY HAD BEEN DIFFERENT. I AM GLAD THAT YOU HAVE THE CHANCE TO APPLY COLOR TO THEM NOW IF MR. STORMON HAS DIFFICULTY APPRECIATING ARTWORK THE WAY THE ARTIST PREFERS IT TO BE, HE CAN ALWAYS CLIMB BACK UP IN HIS IVORY TOWER AND DELICATELY SLIDE HIS OLD ORIGINAL UNDERGROUNDS OUT OF STORAGE TO LOOK THEM OVER AGAIN, INSTEAD.

SO, MR. CORBEN, PLEASE KEEP THOSE NEW STORIES COMING. AND, IF TO DO THAT YOU HAVE TO FILL OUT A COMIC WITH PREVIOUS B&W STORIES NOW DONE IN COLOR, PLEASE KNOW THAT THIS IS ONE FAN OF LONG STANDING WHO IS VERY HAPPY WITH THAT AND DOESN'T CONSIDER IT A POOR BARGAIN AT ALL.

ASIDE FROM ALL OF THE ABOVE, I WOULD GLADLY OFFER TO HELP ANY OF YOUR **NEW** FANS KNOW SOME PLACES WHERE YOUR WORK HAS PREVIOUSLY APPEARED. ENCLOSED IS A COPY OF A BIBLIOGRAPHY I HAVE COMPILED FROM THE CORBEN WORKS I HAVE RUN ACROSS. I WILL GLADLY MAIL ONE FREE TO ANYBODY WHO SENDS ME AN ENVELOPE WITH TWO STAMPS ON IT (UNDOUBTEDLY, MR. STORMAN, WITH HIS "COMPLETE COLLECTION", COULD HAVE BEEN MORE COMPREHENSIVE, SO THIS COMES WITH MY APOLOGIES.)

RICK OBERMEYER
2124 MINDY PLACE
ORLANDO, FL. 32806

HELLO RICHARD CORBEN,

I HAVE BEEN ENJOYING **CHILDREN OF FIRE** IT'S AN INTERESTING STORY AND I AM AWAITING THE LAST ISSUE WITH INTRIGUE. I LIKE THE REVERSING OF THE OLD FANTASY STEREOTYPING THAT YOU'VE DONE, HAVING THE FEMALE BEING THE POWERFUL ONE AND THE MALE BEING THE WEAKER ONE IN NEED OF PROTECTION. UNFORTUNATELY, KIL, THE FEMALE, IS AS BORING AS A LARGE NUMBER OF HER MALE MUSCLE-BOUND COMPATRIOTS. MAL IS ANOTHER STORY. HE'S DIFFERENT FROM MOST OF THE FANTASY AND COMIC BOOK HEROES AROUND IN THAT HE CAN'T PERFORM THE FLASHY ATHLETIC TRICKS AND MAKES DO AS BEST HE CAN WITH WHAT HE HAS. HE IS SORT OF AN **ELRIC** WITHOUT A **STORMBRINGER**. SOMEONE WHO HAS TO WORK HARD FOR HIS OR HER ACCOMPLISHMENTS IS MORE ADMIRABLE THAN SOMEONE WHO EASILY ACHIEVES HIS OR HER GOALS. I WISH YOU WOULD HAVE KEPT THE TWO NEWHALES INVOLVED IN THE STORY. THEIR ACTIONS WOULD HAVE PROVIDED AN INTERESTING COUNTERPOINT TO THE ACTIONS OF THE HUMANS AND WHATEVER ZOMUK IS.

THE ART, OF COURSE, IS THE REAL STAR OF THE SERIES. AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, YOU'RE ONE OF THE TOP COMIC ARTISTS OF ALL TIMES AND YOUR STYLE IS AS INDIVIDUAL AS ANY. I SEE TRACES OF JOHN SEVERIN AND BASIL WOLVERTON IN YOUR STYLE BUT AGAIN YOURS IS A UNIQUE VISION. KEEP THE COLOR. I KNOW IT TAKES MORE TIME AND YOU'RE NO SLOUCH AT DOING BLACK AND WHITE BUT YOU ARE THE **BEST** COLORIST IN COMICS. IT INCREASES AN ALREADY GOOD COMIC BOOK INTO A MAGNIFICENT ONE.

O.K. ON TO THE POINT I WANTED TO WRITE YOU ABOUT. A MR. CRAIG A. STORMON, LIKE A GREAT MANY OTHERS, TAKES YOU TO TASK FOR REPRINTING OLD STORIES IN THE BACK OF YOUR NEW MATERIAL. QUOTING THE GENTLEMAN, "MOST OF YOUR FANS HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING YOU SINCE THE EARLY 70'S OR BEFORE." WELL, I HAPPEN TO BE ONE FAN OF YOURS WHO HASN'T. I GUESS IT'S ALL MY FAULT THAT I WASN'T BORN UNTIL 1969 AND TOOK A FEW YEARS AFTER THAT TO START COLLECTING COMICS. IT'S MY HUMBLE OPINION THAT MR. STORMON UNDERESTIMATES BOTH YOUR ABILITY TO DRAW IN NEW FANS AND THE TASTE OF THE YOUNGER FANS. LISTEN, IF YOU WANT TO (AND I WISH YOU WOULD), YOU COULD PUT OUT A COMIC BOOK DEVOTED TO REPRINTS OF YOUR WORK. THINK OF IT, YOU COULD HAVE A MONTHLY REPRINT BOOK OUT AND COULD CONTINUE TO PUT OUT BIMONTHLY SERIES OF NEW MATERIAL. IT WOULD HELP GET FANTAGOR PRESS REALLY RUNNING AND WOULD GAIN YOU EVEN MORE FANS. I'VE SEEN **MUTANT WORLD** AND A LARGE AMOUNT OF YOUR WORK FOR WARREN'S **CREEPY**. IF ALL YOUR OLD WORK IS AT THE LEVEL OF THOSE AND THE **RAZAR** TRILOGY, IT CAN'T MISS! JUST THINK ABOUT IT (THEN PLEASE DO IT)

DAVID ERIC BARNES
VIRGINIA BEACH, VA.

THANKS DAVID. I'D LOVE TO GET THE RIGHTS TO THE WARREN MATERIAL! DID. THERE'S A PROBLEM WITH THE IDEA THOUGH. AS WARREN PUBLISHING WENT BANKRUPT, HE SOLD EVERYTHING TO ANOTHER PUBLISHER. THIS OTHER PUBLISHER REFUSES TO EVEN DISCUSS THE POSSIBILITY.

I ANNOUNCED LAST ISSUE THAT THE BACKUP STORY THIS TIME WOULD BE TO MEET THE FACES YOU MEET. THE CONCLUSION OF CHILDREN WORKED OUT TO BE LONGER THAN EXPECTED SO KITTEN'S FOR CHRISTIAN WAS SUBSTITUTED AS THE BACKUP.

THAT'S IT FOR NOW. DEN COMICS WILL BE APPEARING IN JUNE. DON'T MISS IT!

Letters Page from *Children of Fire* #3 (Fantagor Press), Page 2

CREDITS:

SHUFFLED SEEDS SCATTERED WRITTEN, DRAWN AND COLORED BY RICHARD CORBEN.

THE CURE WRITTEN AND DRAWN BY BRUCE JONES, COLORED BY CORBEN.

SUCH PRETTY LITTLE TOES WRITTEN BY JAN STRNAD, DRAWN AND COLORED BY CORBEN.

DAMSEL IN DRAGON DRESS WRITTEN BY DOUG MOENCH, DRAWN AND COLORED BY CORBEN. I THINK THIS FIRST APPEARED IN **GRIM WIT 2.**

MAIL ORDER, DISTRIBUTION AND GENERAL SUPPORT BY DONA CORBEN

WE DIDN'T GET MANY LETTERS THIS TIME. I GUESS EVERYBODY IS OVERWHELMED BY DEN #7, OR MORE LIKELY, YOU WERE ALL LOST IN A BATMAN HIGH. ANYWAY HERE'S A SAMPLING OF WHAT WE GOT:

DEAR MR. CORBEN,

WELL, I MUST ADMIT, I'M TOTALLY CONFUSED. I'VE JUST FINISHED READING **DEN 7**, AND IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN, YOU'VE GONE AND KILLED OFF MY TWO FAVORITE CHARACTERS, KATH AND THE RED QUEEN. I CERTAINLY HOPE THAT YOU'VE GOT AN EXPLANATION FOR THIS IN FUTURE ISSUES.

SERIOUSLY, I FEEL AS IF I'VE JUST WATCHED A SEASON ENDING EPISODE OF **DALLAS** OR SOMETHING. I KNOW YOU'LL BE BRINGING BACK EITHER KATH OR THE QUEEN, OR PERHAPS BOTH. I GUESS THAT THIS IS JUST ANOTHER OF YOUR SHREWD MARKETING GESTURES TO GET PEOPLE TO EXTEND THEIR SUBSCRIPTIONS.

HEY, IT WORKED! ENCLOSED FIND A CHECK. KEEP UP THE GREAT WORK. I REALLY DO ENJOY THE SHORT STORIES IN THE BACK ALSO. ESPECIALLY THE **BRUCE JONES** STUFF. LET'S HAVE MUCH MORE OF BRUCE IN THE FUTURE.

SINCERELY,

JOSEPH ALFERIO
SOUTHGATE, MI

KILLING OFF KATH AND THE RED QUEEN MIGHT BE A LITTLE LIKE KILLING DRACULA, THE WEREWOLF OR MUMMY IN THOSE OLD UNIVERSAL MOVIES (OR LIKE KILLING JASON OR FREDDY FOR YOU YOUNGER READERS). THEY'RE ALWAYS BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE BY THE MOST IMPLAUSIBLE REASONING FOR A SEQUEL.

HAVING BRUCE ABOARD REALLY DRESSES UP OUR COMIC. I THINK YOU'LL LIKE THE CURE THIS TIME. I JUST WISH WE COULD RUN BRUCE JONES ART AND STORIES IN EVERY ISSUE.

DEAR RICHARD,

I AGREE WITH DEN'S CHOICE IN **DEN #7**. THE WAY THE TWO CHARACTERS ARE CURRENTLY PORTRAYED, I'D TAKE THE RED QUEEN ANY DAY. I HOPE KATH BECOMES A VILLAIN

I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU'LL BE GOING FOR "R" RATED ("X"?) IN ISSUES 8-10. I HOPE 10 WON'T BE THE LAST ISSUE.

I AGREE WITH BILL BIESTY'S COMMENT. I'D ALSO LIKE TO SEE MORE NON-HUMANOIDS. HOW ABOUT SOME CENTAUROIDS?

WILL YOU BE AT COMICON?

I LIKED THE **DEN #1/#7** PARALLELS

DIOPTASE CRYSTALS,

ED PEGG JR.
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO

MUCH OF KATH'S AND THE RED QUEEN'S STORY IS UNCLEAR AT THIS POINT. I HOPE I CAN FIGURE OUT A WAY TO REVEAL THOSE EVENTS IN A LOGICAL AND ENTERTAINING WAY IN A FUTURE SERIES.

I DIDN'T SAY THIS AND FUTURE ISSUES OF DEN WOULD BE "R" OR "X" RATED. I SAID, DEN 8, 9 AND 10 MAY START HAVING PARTIAL NUDITY IF THE STORY DEVELOPS IN THAT DIRECTION. WELL, THIS ISSUE DIDN'T DEVELOP AS I THOUGHT. I DON'T THINK THE NEXT ONE WILL EITHER.

I HARDLY EVER GO TO COMIC CONVENTIONS.

DEAR RICHARD,

JUST A NOTE TO LET YOU KNOW THAT I REALLY LIKE THE BOOKS YOU'VE BEEN DOING IN THE LAST FEW YEARS **DEN, CHILDREN OF FIRE**, PLUS THE REPRINTS OF YOUR OLDER 70'S MATERIAL.

YOU HAVEN'T LOST YOUR TOUCH AS AN ARTIST, AND YOU'VE IMPROVED AS A STORYTELLER.

I HAVE NOTICED THOUGH, THAT EVERY OTHER LETTER IS ASKING "WHY DON'T DEN AND KATH LOOK THE SAME?"; "WHY ALL THE SHADOWS ON THE FIGURES?". WELL, OBVIOUSLY YOU WANT TO BE ABLE TO REACH THE MAINSTREAM COMICS MARKET; AND, YOU ALSO WANTED TO PROVE THAT YOU COULD PUT OUT A SUCCESSFUL COMIC WITHOUT HAVING TO RESORT TO AN OVERDOSE OF GRAPHIC NUDITY. I THINK YOU'VE DONE THIS REALLY WELL WITH **DEN** OVER THE LAST YEAR.

BUT LIKE MOST READERS, MY FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH YOUR WORK WAS THE OLD **WARREN** MAGS, UNDERGROUND COMIX LIKE **FANTAGOR** AND **GRIM WIT**, AND **HEAVY METAL** MAGAZINE. LIKE MOST EVERYONE, I MISS THE "OLD" DEN AND KATH.

I THINK YOU SHOULD CONSIDER PUTTING OUT A MINI-SERIES OR A GRAPHIC NOVEL IN A FORMAT SIMILAR TO "**BLACK KISS**". TELL EVERYONE UP-FRONT THAT IT'S GOING TO BE GRAPHIC AND STRICTLY ADULTS ONLY MATERIAL. HAVE SOME TIGHT PLOTTING, AND GOOD CHARACTER ZATION, AND THEN LET YOUR IMAGINATION RUN WILD. IT'S BEEN PROVEN THAT STRONG ADULT STUFF LIKE THIS WILL SELL WELL NOWADAYS, IF IT'S PUT OUT IN AN INTELLIGENT FASHION, AND NOT TRY TO CAMOUFLAGE IT AS SOMETHING ELSE.
KEEP **DEN** IN THE TONED DOWN, OR "PG13" MODE THAT HE IS NOW, ALTHOUGH HE COULD CERTAINLY BE THE STAR OF A PROJECT LIKE THIS.

ALSO, A COMPLETE ISSUE OR A SPECIAL EDITION OF **DEN**, DONE IN THE HIGH QUALITY, SLICK PAPER STYLE YOU'RE USING FOR THE FRONT COVERS WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA.

KEEP UP THE FINE WORK YOU'RE DOING ON **DEN**, BUT GIVE SOME THOUGHT TO A PROJECT LIKE THIS FOR THE FUTURE

ONE LAST QUESTION, ANY CHANCES OF GETTING ORIGINAL ARTWORK FROM SOME OF YOUR EARLIER WORK FROM THE 70'S? THANKS VERY MUCH, AND THE BEST OF LUCK TO YOU IN THE FUTURE, RICHARD.

SINCERELY,

GREG SISK
SAN JOSE, CA

I MISS THE "OLD" DEN TOO. THIS WHOLE SERIES, THAT ENDED LAST ISSUE, WAS SOMETHING OF AN EXPERIMENT WITH A "POPULARIZED" VERSION OF DEN. LETTERS LIKE YOURS AND MY OVERALL FEELING ABOUT THE PROJECT TELL ME THAT IT WASN'T COMPLETELY SUCCESSFUL. MAYBE I'VE LEARNED SOMETHING FROM THE EXPERIENCE. MAYBE NOT.

I'D LOVE TO PRODUCE A SLICK COMIC MAGAZINE. I THINK THERE IS A SALES THRESHOLD TO HIT BEFORE SUCH A COMIC IS ECONOMICAL. ONE PRINTER THAT USES SLICK "HUDSON" PAPER, SUGGESTED MY NUMBERS SHOULD BE CLOSER TO 50,000. I'M AFRAID THAT'S A BIT IN THE FUTURE YET.

I'VE SOLD SOME OF MY OLDER STRIPS AND I REGRET DOING IT. THOSE OLD COMIC PAGES ARE PRECIOUS TO ME BEYOND ANY MARKET VALUE AMONG COLLECTORS. SO, I'M HANGING ON TO ALL THE COMIC ART I HAVE. SORRY.

DEAR SIRS,

I CONGRATULATE YOU ON YOUR BEAUTIFUL PUBLICATION. BUT ON THE DEBATE ABOUT NUDITY IN YOUR COMIC, I WOULD LIKE TO STATE MY STRONG SUPPORT FOR THOSE WHO BELIEVE IT SHOULD BE REINSTATED INTO YOUR ARTISTIC PRODUCTION, AS A SIGN OF THE APPROACH THAT

LETTERS CONTINUED ON INSIDE BACK COVER

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Letters Page from *Den* #8 (Fantagor Press), Page 1

LETTERS CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER

MAKES **DEN** A MILESTONE IN THE PRODUCTION OF COMIC ART, TO A DEGREE IT SHOULD TRANSCEND LIMITS OF CURRENT VIEWS, UNTIL THE TIME SUCH VIEWS ABOUT NUDITY BECOME OBSOLETE.

P P S. DO YOU HAVE ANY INTENTION OF CONTINUING **DIMENTO'S** ADVENTURES IN THE **MUTANT WORLD** SOMEDAY?

WITH MANY THANKS,

OFIR HAIVRY
ISRAEL

UNFORTUNATELY, WHEN SOMETHING TRANSCENDS THE LIMITS OF CURRENT VIEWS, THE PRODUCER HAD BETTER BE READY FOR TROUBLE AND REJECTION. I WANT TO BE FREE TO WRITE AND DRAW AS I PLEASE, BUT I DON'T THINK I WANT TO BE A MARTYR.

THERE'S BIG NEWS BREWING ABOUT DIMENTO AND HIS FRIENDS IN MUTANT WORLD. AFTER DEN 10, JAN STRNAD AND I WILL BE WORKING ON A NEW SERIES FOR 1990 TENTATIVELY TITLED SON OF MUTANT WORLD.

DEAR CORBENS-

YOU SHOULD PRINT A SUB RATE FOR THOSE OF US WHO ARE WEAK IN THE MEMORY DEPARTMENT; I'M GOING BY THE THREE ISSUE RATE QUOTED IN AN EARLIER ISSUE. I'D CERTAINLY BE WILLING TO RENEW FOR A LONGER RUN IF THAT WERE POSSIBLE. I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO THE TRANSFORMATION OF KIL INTO THE QUEEN

I SEE THAT A COLORED COMPILATION OF **VIC & BLOOD** IS GOING TO BE PRINTED ANY CHANCE OF PURCHASING A SIGNED COPY FROM THE ARTIST?

BEST WISHES,

SCOTT WYATT
BEMIDJI, MN

WE USUALLY PUT A LINE IN ABOUT SUBSCRIPTIONS AT THE END OF THE LETTERS. WE FORGOT LAST ISSUE.

KIL'S PHYSICAL TRANSFORMATION HAS BEGUN THIS ISSUE; THE PSYCHOTIC SCHIZOPHRENIA COMES LATER.

I DON'T KNOW IF WE'LL CARRY THE COLORED VIC & BLOOD BUT I'LL AUTOGRAPH ANY COPIES SENT WITH RETURN POSTAGE.

FANTAGOR PRESS-

THE DARK PLANET LOOKS PROMISING, THE FLYER IS GORGEOUS! IS IT ANIMATION OR LIVE ACTION? THE FLYER FOR **JEREMY BROOD** ALSO LOOKS GOOD, BUT I THINK I'LL PASS ON THAT. I HAVE BOTH PARTS

P.S. I'M GLAD RICHARD IS PUBLISHING HIS OWN STUFF! MORE NUDITY- YAYY!

GET RID OF THE COMPUTER LETTERING - IT'S GROSS! JUST JOKING, I REALLY DON'T GIVE A SHIT EITHER WAY!

JOHN KELLY
SHREWSBURY, NJ

THE DARK PLANET IS A TWO PART, LIVE ACTION, SCIENCE FICTION, HORROR ANTHOLOGY. CHECK OUT THE AD IN THIS COMIC.

WATCH FOR MORE CACA* FROM FANTAGOR PRESS IF WE CAN COME UP WITH A SYSTEM WITHIN OUR BUDGET.

*** CACA: COMPUTER AIDED COMIC ART**

DEN IS STILL MISSING FROM DEN 9!...OR IS HE?

IN STRANGE NATIVITY, KIL CAN'T GET ALONG WITH ANYONE SHE MEETS, SHE FEELS MOTHERLY URGES, AND ZOMUK TAKES ADVANTAGE OF HER WHEN SHE GETS A HEADACHE

JAN STRNAD AND CORBEN BRING YOU **THE WRECK OF THE KATERRA-DAN** A BRUTAL ADVENTURER GETS LOST IN A REMOTE DESERT OF NEVERWHERE.

FANTAGOR PRESS IS PROUD TO PRESENT A MASTER OF COMIC ART IN **DEN 9, ALEX NINO!** IN **THE DRINKERS OF DUST, ALEX** AND **JAN STRNAD** TELL A STRANGE STORY OF ANOTHER ADVENTURER WHO IS VERY THIRSTY.

THE BEST IN **FANTASTIC ART** AND **STORIES**, ALL IN COLOR! **DEN 9** WILL BE PUBLISHED IN OCTOBER. DON'T MISS IT! SUBSCRIBE TO 9 & 10, $4 POSTPAID (POSTPAID IN THE U.S.A. ONLY).

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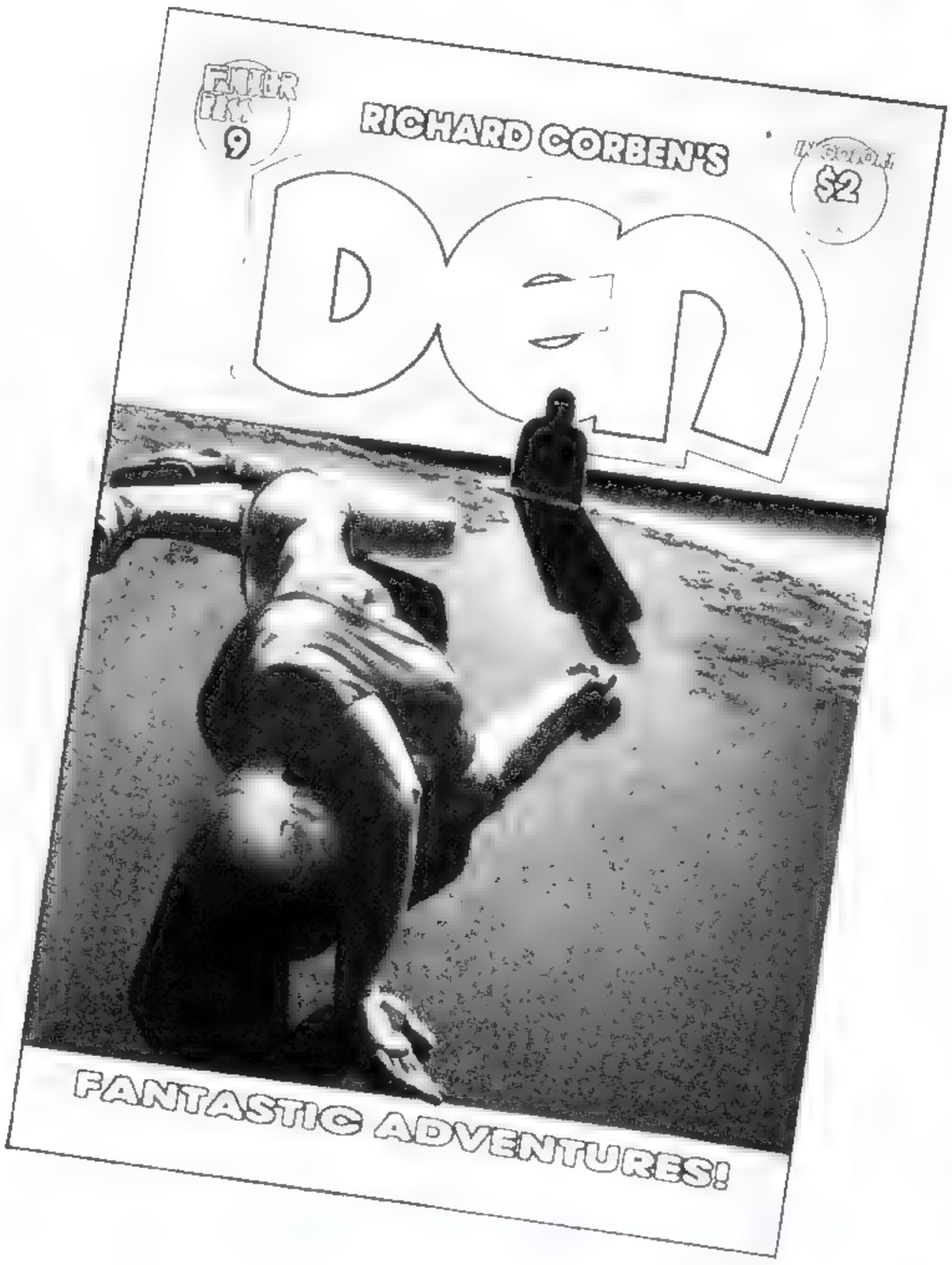

Letters Page from *Den* #8 (Fantagor Press), Page 2

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT:

JEREMY BROOD WASN'T PUBLISHED IN AUGUST AS PROMISED BUT IT HAS NOW BEEN PRINTED AND *IS* ON A BOAT ON ITS WAY TO US. IT SHOULD BE ON YOUR DEALER'S SHELVES AND AVAILABLE FROM US BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS...I HOPE.

CREDITS:

STRANGE NATIVITY, WRITTEN, DRAWN AND COLORED BY RICHARD CORBEN.

THE DRINKERS OF DUST, WRITTEN BY JAN STRNAD, DRAWN AND COLORED BY ALEX NINO.

POSSESSED, A PHOTO COLLAGE BY CORBEN, INSPIRED BY THE LOVECRAFT STORY, **THE THING ON THE DOORSTEP**.

THE WRECK OF THE KATERRA-DAN, WRITTEN BY STRNAD, DRAWN AND COLORED BY CORBEN.

TO MEET THE FACES YOU MEET, WRITTEN BY STRNAD, DRAWN AND COLORED BY CORBEN. THIS WAS FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1972 IN **FEVER DREAMS** BY **KITCHEN SINK PRESS**.

MAIL ORDER, DISTRIBUTION AND GENERAL SUPPORT BY DONA CORBEN.

HERE'S SOME LETTERS ABOUT DEN AND OTHER CORBEN STUFF.

DEAR MR. CORBEN;

THE BRUCE JONES BACKUP PIECE WAS OK, BUT THE BRIAN BUNIAK COMEDY PIECE WAS INANE AND WHOLLY UNWELCOME. COULD I SUGGEST FILLING OUT THE BALANCE OF **DEN** WITH PAGES FROM YOUR SKETCHBOOK? AFTER ALL, THAT'S WHAT MOST FANS BUY **DEN** FOR, THE CORBEN ART.

FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, MY VOTE ON THE NUDITY QUESTION IS YES. EVEN THE MORE MAINSTREAM COMICS OCCASIONALLY TEST THE OPEN-MINDEDNESS OF THE PUBLIC; THEY AVOID UNDUE PRESSURE BY SIMPLY LABELING THEIR COMICS AS "SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS".

ALSO, I WOULD LIKE TO SUGGEST YOU EXPERIMENT WITH THE LIGHTS AND DARKS IN YOUR COVER ART. THOUGH YOUR DESIGN AND EXECUTION ARE SUPERB, THE OVERALL IMPRESSION OF YOUR COVERS IS VERY DARK. ON THE SHELVES OF THE COMIC SHOPS AND NEWSSTANDS, **DEN** COMPETES WITH A MULTITUDE OF BRIGHTLY CLAD SUPERHEROES SURROUNDED WITH BOLD OUTLINES. PERHAPS A GREATER CONTRAST WOULD CATCH THE EYES OF A FEW MORE POTENTIAL READERS.

FINALLY, I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU ABOUT A LIMITED EDITION SCULPTURE YOU DID OVER TEN YEARS AGO. I SAW IT AT THE SAME CONVENTION WHERE I SAW **NEVERWHERE** IT WAS OF A WOMAN LYING BACK ON A ROCK AND IT WAS FANTASTIC. IF ANY READER HAS A COPY THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO PART WITH, I WOULD BE INTERESTED IN PURCHASING IT.

SINCERELY,

JOSEPH CROCKETT
ELKTON, MD

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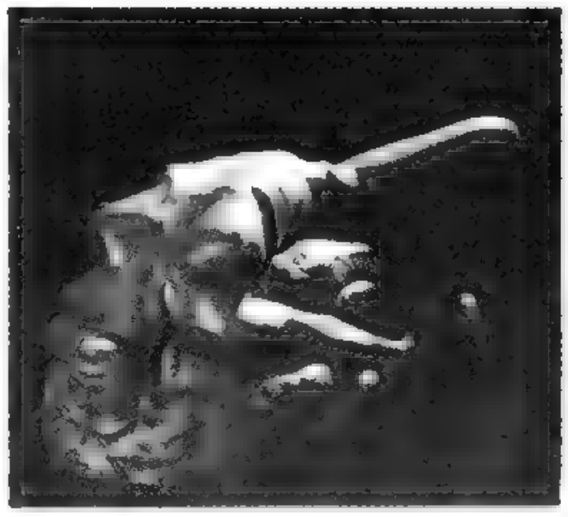
I'M ALWAYS EXPERIMENTING WITH THE LIGHTS AND DARKS IN THE COVER ART, AND ALL THE OTHER ART I DO. SOMETIMES THE PRINTED PIECE WORKS WELL, SOMETIMES NOT SO WELL.



THE SCULPTURE WAS AN EDITION OF 50 CAST IN POLYESTER RESIN IN A CARAMEL BROWN COLOR. ALL I REMEMBER ABOUT THEM IS THEY WERE SO BULKY AND HARD TO STORE.

DEAR RICHARD CORBEN,

I'M GLAD TO SEE SOME REPRINTS IN THE BACK OF YOUR RECENT COMIC BOOKS, BUT THE DARKENING OF SEMI-NUDITY IS UNCALLED FOR. I DON'T CARE IF YOU DRAW NUDES OR CLOTHED PEOPLE BUT CHANGING ARTWORK TO SATISFY SOME OLD "MPAA" TYPES IS TASTELESS. I KNOW YOUR PROBABLY UNDER A LOT OF PRESSURE BECAUSE OF THIS AND I HAVE A SOLUTION.

STOP DRAWING HUMANS!! MAKE MORE NON-HUMAN CHARACTERS, ALIENS, DEMONS, ETC. WITH YOUR BRUSHES AND VISIONS, YOU COULD CREATE A WHOLE NEW MYTHOLOGY OF NON-HUMANS IN CONFLICT. BIZARRE LANDSCAPES ARE THE HIGHLIGHTS OF YOUR BOOK, **DEN**. START EXPANDING TO A WORLD OF COMPLETELY CTHULUIAN TYPE NON-HUMANS. I KNOW IT WOULD BE A SMASH!!!

BEST WISHES,

KEVIN KALKHOVEN (THE CENOBITE)
WINNIPEG, MAN., CANADA

NOW THAT'S AN IMAGINATIVE IDEA! BUT I THINK AT LEAST ONE OR TWO ANTHROPOMORPHIC CHARACTERS WOULD BE NEEDED FOR READER IDENTIFICATION AND CONTRAST TO THE NON-HUMANS. ONE OF THE MAIN THRUSTS OF MY ART IS MY EXPRESSION OF THE HUMAN FORM. I DON'T THINK I COULD GIVE THAT UP.

DEAR MR. CORBEN;

I HAVE FOLLOWED YOUR WORK SINCE AT LEAST THE MID-70'S, AND YOU SIMPLY HAVE NO PEER. YOUR STORIES ARE WHAT I CAN REFRESHINGLY CALL "SERIOUS" WITHOUT BEING DEPRESSINGLY GRIM (AT LEAST AS FAR AS CHARACTERS SUCH AS **DEN** ARE CONCERNED). YOUR CHARACTERS HAVE VERY DISTINCT AND WELL-DEVELOPED PERSONALITIES. WHEN USED FREQUENTLY (SUCH AS **DEN**), THEY EXHIBIT A CONTINUOUSLY INTERESTING DEPTH TO THEIR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS. AS TO THE ARTWORK - I CANNOT CONJURE A PROPER SUPERLATIVE TO FIT. FOR ME, YOUR ARTWORK IS OF THE HIGHEST ORDER - IT IS MY FAVORITE.

I AM GOING TO ATTEMPT TO INCREASE READERS (AND BUYERS) OF YOUR WORK; YOU MOST CERTAINLY DESERVE IT AND I SURELY WOULD REGRET IT IF YOU COULD NOT CONTINUE.

AS A READER OF THE **HEAVY METAL** ERA **DEN** STORY (**NEVERWHERE**), COUNT ME IN ON THE PRO-NUDITY SIDE. SEX WAS A **VERY** INTEGRAL PART OF THE ORIGINAL **DEN**, AND I ENJOYED IT VERY MUCH. THE MALE-FEMALE INTERPLAY SEEMS RESTRICTED IN THE CURRENT **DEN** ISSUES*.

MORE IMPORTANTLY, MR. CORBEN DEPICTS THE HUMAN ANATOMY **SO BEAUTIFULLY,** IT IS A SHAME THAT I CANNOT SEE HIS CREATIONS AS COMPLETELY AS ONCE WERE POSSIBLE.

BOTTOM LINE, HOWEVER, IS THAT I GREATLY ADMIRE MR. CORBEN'S WORK AND I TRUST HIS ARTISTIC JUDGMENT. I WILL CONTINUE TO OFFER MY SUPPORT, BOTH FINANCIAL AND SPIRITUAL, ESPECIALLY WHEN THE MAN IS WELL-MUSCLED, THE WOMAN IS WELL-ENDOWED, LOVE UNITES THEM, AND **GOOD** TRIUMPHS AT LAST OVER **EVIL**.

GOOD FORTUNE!

VINCENT RICHARDS
STEUBENVILLE, OH

* RESTRICTED BY COMPARISON.

LETTERS CONTINUED ON INSIDE BACK COVER

LETTERS CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER.

THANKS VINCENT. WHEN THINGS GET TOUGH, LETTERS LIKE YOURS HELP KEEP US GOING.

DEAR CORBENS,

ANOTHER INTERESTING ISSUE. THE DIFFERENCE IN HIVE PERSONALITIES BETWEEN KIL'S PEOPLE AND THE DRAMITES WAS A NICE TOUCH. THE APPEARANCE OF THE DYING QUEEN COULD LEAD TO SOME UNPLEASANT SPECULATION ABOUT KIL'S FUTURE ATHLETIC ABILITY.

I ALWAYS ENJOY BRUCE JONES' SOMEWHAT OBLIQUE STORIES. IT TAKES A REAL TALENT TO DEVELOP MOST OF A STORY LINE WITHOUT DIALOGUE. HOWEVER, I'M STILL A SUCKER FOR A LITTLE GRATUITOUS VIOLENCE AND UNBELIEVABLE PHYSIQUES.

AS FOR ALL THE NUDITY BLATHER, "TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE." YOU'VE GOT THIS SUBSCRIBER HOOKED.

SINCERELY,

SCOTT WYATT
BEMIDJI, MN

ACTUALLY KIL'S OBSESSION ABOUT HER TRANSFORMATION FROM WARRIOR TO QUEEN IS MISGUIDED. AS HINTED AT IN DEN 6, HER RADIATED GENES AND HORMONES TOOK HER ONLY HALFWAY. THERE SHE STAYED, WITH SOME MOTHERLY FLESH, BUT STERILE AND WITH A KILLER'S INSTINCTS.

ABOUT THE DARK PLANET VIDEO:

DEAR MR. CORBEN,

I AM WRITING TO LET YOU KNOW, BEING A LONG TIME FAN OF YOUR WORK, THAT I PURCHASED A COPY OF **DARK PLANET**. I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I THOUGHT WITH YOUR NAME ON THAT PRODUCT IT WAS SURE TO BE A QUALITY WORK OF ART. I WAS WRONG!!

I HAVE NEVER FELT SO RIPPED OFF **EVER** IN ALL MY YEARS OF COMIC COLLECTING. THIS LETTER WILL PROBABLY END UP IN THE WASTE PAPER BASKET BUT I FELT I HAD TO TELL YOU THAT I HAVE BEEN A LOYAL FAN OF YOURS SINCE THE EARLY UNDERGROUND DAYS BUT THIS VIDEO (THOUGH PACKAGED BEAUTIFULLY), WAS AN ALL AROUND DISASTER THAT BELONGS IN YOUR HOME MOVIE COLLECTION. I COULD GO ON AND ON ABOUT THIS DISGRACE BUT YOU HAD TO HAVE EXPECTED SUCH A RESPONSE TO THIS VIDEO. EVERY ASPECT OF IT IS POORLY EXECUTED.

HOPING FOR MANY YEARS MORE OF GREAT **ARTWORK!**

ONE OF YOUR BIGGEST FANS,

ROBERT SCHNEIDER
SEMINOLE, FL

FANTAGOR VIDEO,

I'M SENDING THE **DARK PLANET** MOVIE BACK TO YOU. IT'S NOT WHAT I THOUGHT IT WAS. I THOUGHT IT WAS GOING TO BE ALL ANIMATION, NOT LIVE ACTION. I'M SORRY. COULD YOU PLEASE SEND ME A REFUND? THANK YOU. I'M ENCLOSING MY RECEIPT.

MARK MCGINTY
ARVIN, CA

P.S. I STILL LOVE RICHARD CORBEN'S WORK AND I WILL CONTINUE TO PURCHASE IT. I WAS JUST LOOKING FOR AN ANIMATION MOVIE THAT'S ALL.

SORRY FOLKS, I REALLY DIDN'T EXPECT THIS RESPONSE TO THE DARK PLANET. IN MY DEFENSE, I CAN ONLY SAY THAT I WORKED VERY HARD ON THIS VIDEO, HARDER THAN ON ANY OTHER ART PROJECT I HAVE EVER DONE AND WITHOUT A RESPECTABLE BUDGET, EVEN FOR A FIRST TIME INDEPENDENT PRODUCTION (UNDER $20,000). NEVERTHELESS, I REFUSE TO BE PIGEON-HOLED INTO BEING A GRAPHIC ARTIST ONLY, BUT FOR YOUR BENEFIT I'LL ENDEAVOR TO LABEL MY WORKS AS CLEARLY AS POSSIBLE SO YOU WON'T BE "TAKEN" AGAIN.

TO MARK AND OTHERS WHO WERE EXPECTING AN ANIMATION FEATURE, I'M SORRY ABOUT THE CONFUSION, BUT I NEVER SAID IT WAS ANIMATION IN THE SOLICITATION AND ASSUMED YOU UNDERSTOOD THAT MEANT LIVE ACTION. THE ADS NOW SAY "LIVE ACTION".

I HOPE THE LETTERS ABOVE DON'T SCARE OFF TOO MANY ADVENTUROUS VIDEO CUSTOMERS, BUT I DON'T WANT TO MISREPRESENT THE DARK PLANET. I LIKE THE DARK PLANET. ROBERT AND MARK DIDN'T LIKE IT. I GUESS IT DEPENDS ON YOUR EXPECTATIONS.

RICHARD CORBEN,

I JUST VIEWED YOUR FILM, THE DARK PLANET. A TRULY AMAZING ADVENTURE—EVERY RULE OF WHAT YOU HAVE TO SEE ON THE SCREEN IS THROWN OUT THE WINDOW. YEARS AGO YOU DID THE SAME THING WITH A MAN CALLED **DEN**...

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME,

FLOYD LEWIS
SAVANNAH, GA

THANKS FLOYD. I REALLY NEEDED THAT AFTER THOSE OTHER LETTERS.

THE DEN SERIES CLOSES IN FOR A CHRISTMAS FINISH!

IN **PROMISES, PROMISES**, OLD ZEG RECLAIMS HIS COOK, AND...YOU GUESSED IT, SOME PROMISES ARE MADE BY MAL, KIL..AND CORBEN.

ALSO INCLUDED IS **DONNEMAN'S BLUFF** BY STRNAD AND CORBEN. A STRANDED ASTRONAUT TELLS HIS STORY.

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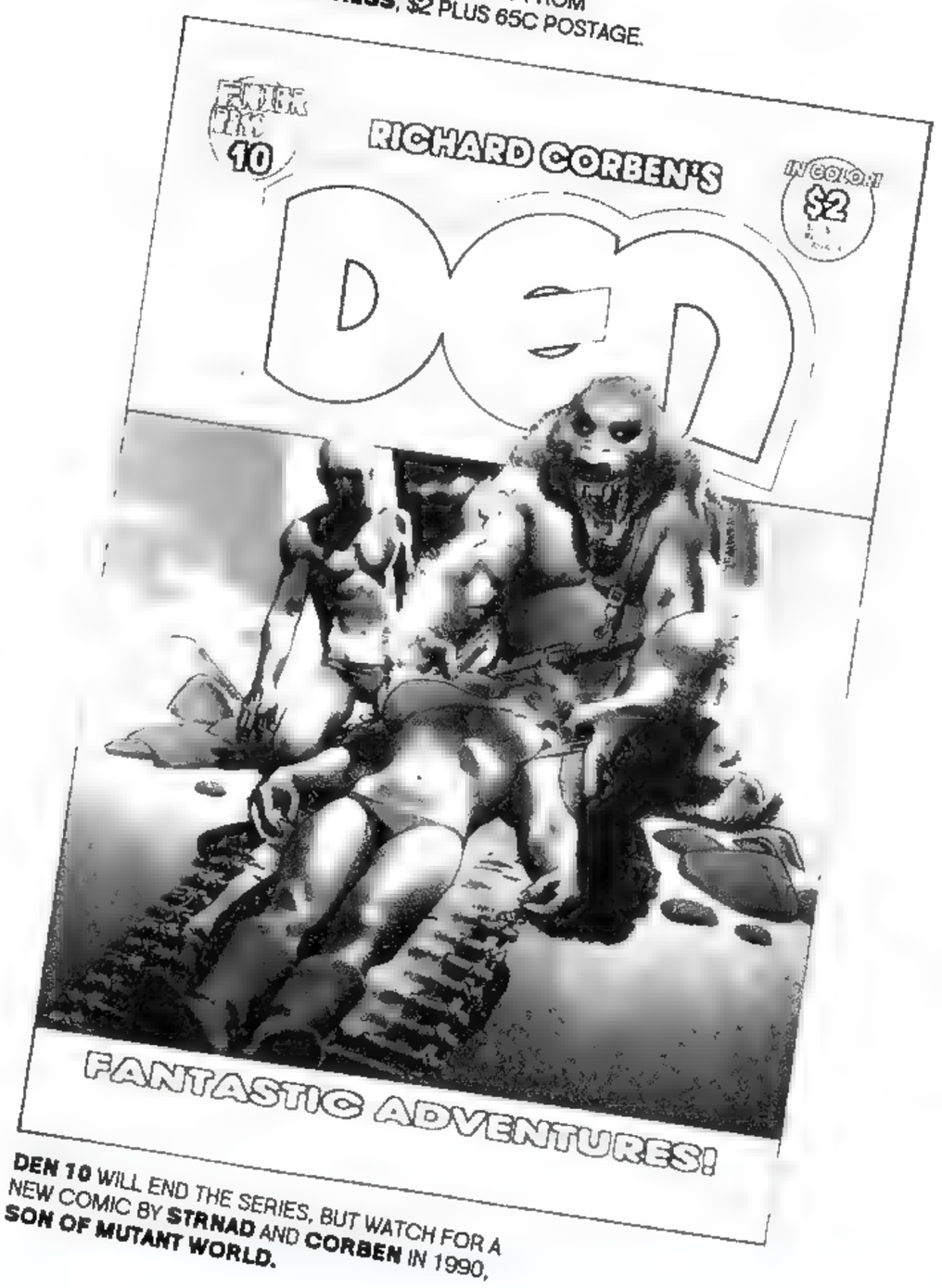
ALEX NINO AND JAN STRNAD RETURN WITH **S'NO ANGEL**. CUTE CHARACTERS WITH BASE DESIRES LIVE IN THE NORTH WOODS.

AVAILABLE AT YOUR COMIC DEALER IN **DECEMBER** OR ORDER DIRECT FROM **FANTAGOR PRESS**, $2 PLUS 65C POSTAGE.



DEN 10 WILL END THE SERIES, BUT WATCH FOR A NEW COMIC BY **STRNAD** AND **CORBEN** IN 1990, **SON OF MUTANT WORLD.**

Letters Page from *Den* #9 (Fantagor Press), Page 2

CREDITS:

PROMISES, PROMISES, WRITTEN, DRAWN AND COLORED BY RICHARD CORBEN.

S'NO ANGEL, WRITTEN BY JAN STRNAD, DRAWN AND COLORED BY ALEX NINO

INCANTATION, WRITTEN BY STRNAD, PHOTO COLLAGE BY CORBEN.

DONNEMAN'S BLUFF WRITTEN BY STRNAD, DRAWN BY CORBEN, COLORED BY STAN DRESSER.

TO MEET THE FACES YOU MEET, PART 2, WRITTEN BY STRNAD, DRAWN AND COLORED BY CORBEN. THIS WAS FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1972 IN **FEVER DREAMS** BY **KITCHEN SINK PRESS**.

MAIL ORDER, DISTRIBUTION AND GENERAL SUPPORT BY DONA CORBEN

THIS IS THE LAST ISSUE OF DEN FOR A WHILE AND HERE'S THE LAST DEN LETTERS COLUMN:

DEAR MR. CORBEN,

I MUST SAY THAT I HAVE GREATLY ENJOYED THE NEW **DEN**. SIMON REVELSTROKE, I FEEL, LEAVES MUCH TO BE DESIRED; I NEVER HAVE READ A STORY BY HIM WHICH I ENJOYED FOR THE STORY. RATHER HIS LAME WRITING IS MADE BETTER BY YOUR GREAT ART. BRUCE JONES AND JAN STRNAD: I WOULD LIKE TO SEE MORE OF THEIR WORK; IT IS QUITE GOOD. JONES' SOLO STORIES IN THE RESENT **DEN** BOOKS HAVE BEEN VERY GOOD FOR THE MOST PART EXCEPT FOR **SEA SERPENTS** WHICH I DIDN'T CARE FOR. **DEN 8**, SO FAR, HAS BEEN THE MOST ENJOYABLE OF THE NEW STORIES. I HOPE YOU KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK. ABOUT THE LACK OF "FLESH": IT DOES NOT BOTHER ME, JUST DON'T LET YOURSELF BE FOOLED INTO THINKING LESS FLESH MEANS MORE SALES BECAUSE EVEN WITH YOUR SELF IMPOSED CENSORSHIP, THE LOCAL COMIC SHOP I GO TO STILL PUTS **DEN** IN THE ADULT SECTION.

A FAN,

RUSSELL E. BARNES
VIRGINIA BEACH, VA

I LOVE HAVING JAN AND BRUCE'S WORK IN FANTAGOR COMICS SO YOU CAN EXPECT MORE OF THEM IN 1990.

DEAR RICH, ET AL.,

I AM REALLY GLAD TO SEE YOU ARE WORKING. ONE THING BOTHERS ME. DISTRIBUTION IN SACRAMENTO IS MARGINAL; IS THIS JUST THE WAY IT IS OR WHAT? AS SOON AS YOUR BOOK HITS THE STANDS AT OUR LOCAL **TOWER BOOKS**, IT SELLS OUT

I'VE BEEN READING SOME OF HARVEY PEKER'S STUFF (**AMERICAN SPLENDOR** OUT OF CLEVELAND). I'D LOVE TO SEE A PEKER/CORBEN TEAM-UP. I KNOW IT'S PROBABLY NOT YOUR STYLE, BUT I ALSO KNOW IT WOULD BE AWESOME

THANKS FOR THE READING PLEASURE,

MARTIN WALLNER
SACRAMENTO, CA

RETAILER APATHY TOWARD INDEPENDENT PUBLISHERS IS PROBABLY THE MAJOR FACTOR SUPPRESSING OUR PROGRESS, AND THERE'S REALLY NOT MUCH WE CAN DO ABOUT IT. HOWEVER, OUR PHILOSOPHY IS TO CONTINUE TO DO THE BEST WE CAN; AND PERHAPS LITTLE BY LITTLE, THE RETAILERS WILL TAKE A CHANCE WITH US.

DEN 10. DEN IS PUBLISHED B MONTHLY BY **FANTAGOR PRESS**, A DIVISION OF CORBEN STUDIOS; P.O. BOX 8632; KANSAS CITY, MO 64114; 816-942-7805. **PROMISES, PROMISES** IS COPYRIGHT©1989 BY RICHARD CORBEN. **S'NO ANGEL** IS COPYRIGHT©1989 BY JAN STRNAD AND ALEX NINO **INCANTATION** IS COPYRIGHT©1989 BY JAN STRNAD AND RICHARD CORBEN. **DONNEMAN'S BLUFF** IS COPYRIGHT© 1989 BY JAN STRNAD AND RICHARD CORBEN. **TO MEET THE FACES YOU MEET**, PART 2, IS COPYRIGHT©1972 BY JAN STRNAD AND RICHARD CORBEN. THE ENTIRE CONTENTS IS COPYRIGHT© 1989 BY RICHARD CORBEN ANY SIMILARITY BETWEEN NAMES, CHARACTERS, PERSONS OR INSTITUTIONS IN THIS COMIC BOOK AND THOSE OF ANY REAL PERSONS OR INSTITUTIONS IS COINCIDENTAL.

DEAR RICHARD AND DONA;

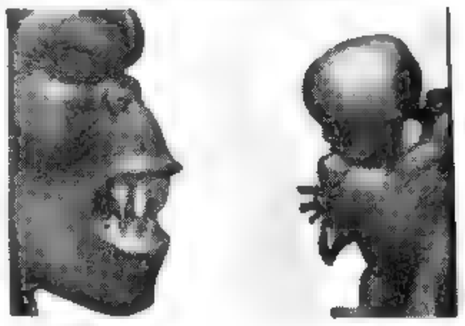
DEN 9 WAS A SHOCKING TURN OF EVENTS, MAINLY BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE USE OF **BLOOD**. NEVER BEFORE HAVE I SEEN IT USED SO GRAPHICALLY AS YOU DID WHEN KIL RECEIVED THAT VICIOUS HEAD WOUND. THIS AMOUNT OF REALISM IS VERY RARELY ACHIEVED BY MANY ARTISTS BUT ANOTHER SHOCK (FOR ME) WAS STILL IN STORE. THE MEDIOCRE TREATMENT OF KIL'S (?) BABY, WHEN **ANY CHILD** IS OBVIOUSLY **IMPORTANT** WAS A GOOD MOVE IN THE STORY-TELLING, BUT THE PICTURE OF THE BABY'S HEAD IN ZOMUK'S MOUTH (NOT TO MENTION THE DIALOGUE) LEFT ME SPEECHLESS. I WAS VERY RELIEVED INDEED WHEN H'S PATHETIC LIFE WAS ENDED. I'VE FOLLOWED YOUR WORK FOR A LONG TIME NOW AND I'D THOUGHT I'D SEEN EVERY TRICK YOU COULD PULL (THOUGH YOU MIGHT BE IN FOR SOME STICK (CRITICISM) ON TH'S POINT THOUGH).

SEEING DEN ON THE LAST PAGE BROUGHT OUT A WRY SMILE, KNOWING THAT WITH DEN AROUND THINGS MIGHT BE ALRIGHT, BUT THEN AGAIN **I DON'T REALLY KNOW YOU AT ALL!!**

ALL THE BEST

DARREN SCUTT
ENGLAND

KIL AND MAL'S WORLD IS LIKE OUR NATURAL WORLD WHERE UNPROTECTED INFANTS DON'T LAST LONG, BUT IT WAS ONLY A CLOSE CALL. ACTUALLY, I HAVE PLANS FOR THE LITTLE TYKE IN A FUTURE STORY.



CS/FANTAGOR:

MY IMPRESSION IS THAT YOU HAVE NO LACK OF IMAGINATION FOR PROJECTS, MR. CORBEN, BUT (AND I KNOW THIS MAY BE OVER WORKED IN SOME RESPECTS) YOU COULD DO SUCH AN OUTSTANDING ACCOUNT OF BURROUGH'S **JOHN CARTER OF MARS** SERIES THAT I'D STAND IN LINE TO THROW ROCKS AT ANYTHING ELSE.

BEST REGARDS,

JOHN CARLEN
ROCKLEDGE, FL

I THINK THE JOHN CARTER SERIES WOULD BE IDEAL MATERIAL FOR ME IF I HAD A FREE REIGN WITH THE INTERPRETATION AND ADAPTION.

DEAR RICHARD AND DONA,

I MUST SAY THAT I AM DISAPPOINTED WITH **DEN 8 & 9**. THE AMOUNT OF **DEN** MATERIAL HAS SHRUNK TO LESS THAN HALF OF WHAT IS FOUND IN THE EARLIER ISSUES. THE BACK-UP MATERIAL IS FINE, BUT I BUY **DEN** FOR THE MAIN STORY AND FEEL SLIGHTLY CHEATED WHEN LESS THAN HALF THE COMIC IS DEVOTED TO DEN AND COMPANY.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN **DEN** AND **CHILDREN OF FIRE** IS QUITE INTERESTING THOUGH. AT FIRST I THOUGHT THAT **DEN 9** RAN CONTRADICTORY TO THE STORYLINE IN **NEVERWHERE**. HOW CAN THAT BE DEN RESCUING KIL A.K.A. THE RED QUEEN BUT WAIT! I FORGOT ALL ABOUT UNCLE DAN, A.K.A. DEN THE FIRST. YEAH, NOW I GET IT. WELL THE ONLY QUESTION LEFT TO ANSWER IS, WHAT BECOMES OF THE NEWLY HATCHED HUMANOID? SOMEHOW, I SUSPECT HE GETS TO LIVE A LITTLE LONGER. HOPEFULLY **DEN 10** WILL EXPLAIN ALL - (IN LENGTHY DETAIL)
S.NCERELY,

MAHER SALEH
CANADA

SORRY MAHER, YOU MUST REALIZE BY NOW THAT I NEVER EXPLAIN ALL IN LENGTHY DETAIL. I SOMETIMES SHOW CERTAIN EVENTS IN DETAIL, BUT LEAVE OTHERS FOR THE READER TO FIGURE OUT. PROBABLY ONE OF THE WORST THINGS ABOUT MY OWN WRITING IS THAT I LEAVE TOO MUCH OUT. THAT'S WHY I NEED JAN STRNAD, BRUCE JONES AND SIMON REVELSTROKE.

DEAR RICHARD,

I HAVE ALWAYS MAINTAINED THAT COMICS CAN BE DIRECTED AT ADULTS AND WHEN I SAW ISSUE 8 OF **DEN** ON THE SHELVES (YOU CAN THANK THE **BATMAN** PEAK FOR THAT!) IN A LOCAL STORE, I SNAPPED IT UP IMMEDIATELY

I WAS DISAPPOINTED. OBVIOUSLY, I HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO FOLLOW THE DEVELOPING STORYLINE BUT I EXPECTED A FULL MAGAZINE OF **DEN**, NOT A MEASLY 10 PAGES. AND THOSE DAMN SHADOWS! WHERE IS THE ART IN PUTTING A SHADOW OVER THE APPROPRIATE APPENDAGE. PERSONALLY, I FIND "COVER-UP" FAR MORE OFFENSIVE, CONDESCENDING AND INSULTING THAN ANY AMOUNT OF NUDITY.

BRING BACK GRAPHIC NUDITY AND SEX A.S.A.P. I'M SURE THAT YOU'VE HAD LETTERS LIKE THIS FROM THE BEGINNING BUT I HAD TO ADD MY VOTE.

PLEASE ALSO DEVOTE THE ENTIRE ISSUE TO **DEN** - 10 PAGES EVERY TWO MONTHS IN A MAG THAT COSTS MORE THAN DOUBLE THE AVERAGE U.S. COMIC IS A BIT OF A COP OUT.

KIND REGARDS,

AL RHODES
WEST YORKSHIRE, ENGLAND

MAYBE I SHOULD THANK THE BATMAN PHENOMENON FOR GETTING YOU INTO A COMIC STORE BUT I (AND VIRTUALLY ALL OTHER INDEPENDENT PUBLISHERS) CAN ALSO THANK THE BATMAN RUSH FOR RETAILERS ORDERING INCREDIBLE AMOUNTS OF BAT STUFF AND CUTTING THEIR ORDERS OF EVERYTHING ELSE. OUCH!

WHEN MAKING THE DECISION ABOUT THE LEAD STORY LENGTH, I'M FACED WITH BALANCING THE NUMBER OF PAGES WITH THE AMOUNT OF TIME I CAN SPEND ON EACH PAGE. COMPARE THE EARLIER ISSUES OF DEN WITH NUMBERS 8, 9 AND 10 AND WITH THE CHILDREN OF FIRE SERIES. THE EARLY DEN'S WERE BASICALLY OUTLINE DRAWINGS, COLORED WITH ONLY A HINT OF MODELING. THE FORMS AND FIGURES IN THIS ISSUE WERE RENDERED IN A MORE TIME CONSUMING WAY. SO MORE TIME SPENT ON EACH PAGE MEANS FEWER PAGES.

DEAR RICHARD:

ALLOW ME TO ADD MY VOICE TO THE GROWING NUMBER OF FANS IN YOUR LETTERS COLUMN WHO KEEP URGING YOU TO GET BACK TO SHOWING EXPLICIT NUDITY IN YOUR ARTWORK. I TRULY BELIEVE THIS LATEST **DEN** VENTURE AND YOUR ARTISTIC INTEGRITY HAVE SUFFERED IMMENSELY BY YOUR EFFORTS TO MAKE NOT ONLY **DEN**, BUT YOUR EARLIER WORK AS WELL, MORE MAINSTREAM BY DOING TO THEM WHAT "IL BRAGHETTONE" DID TO MICHELANGELO'S **LAST JUDGMENT** IN THE SISTINE CHAPEL. NOWHERE IS THIS MORE PAINFULLY OBVIOUS THAN IN THE STORY, **THE TEMPLE**, IN **DEN #3**. IN THE COPY OF **FANTAGOR #3** I HAVE, THE FIG LEAVES ARE SHOWN ONLY IN THE FIRST PAGE OF THE STORY AND THE GREAT MOTHER IS BEAUTIFULLY NUDE. IN THE **DEN #3** VERSION, EVERY HINT OF NUDITY HAS BEEN COVERED OVER MOSTLY BY GRAVITY-DEFYING FIG LEAVES THAT CHEAPENS THE ART TO THE LEVEL OF THE LUDICROUS.

IN MY OPINION, IT WAS NOT JUST YOUR BEAUTIFUL SCULPTURAL STYLE OF RENDERING THE FIGURE, THE EYE SEARING ACID COLORS AND THE UNBELIEVABLE REPRODUCTION TECHNIQUES THAT GAVE YOU SUCH WELL DESERVED INTERNATIONAL CULT STATUS. A LOT HAD TO DO WITH YOUR FEARLESS USE OF EXPLICIT NUDITY AND THE ALL-PERVASIVE EROTICISM IT INFUSED INTO YOUR STORIES.

PLEASE DON'T GIVE IT UP. LET THE SUCCESS OF **BLACK KISS** BY HOWARD CHAYKIN AND **FAUST** BY

LETTERS CONTINUED ON INSIDE BACK COVER

Letters Page from *Den* #10 (Fantagor Press), Page 1

LETTERS CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER

TINA VIGIL ENCOURAGE YOU TO HELP MAKE THE ADULT COMIC BOOK A STRONG AND LEGITIMATE AND THEREFORE EVENTUALLY LUCRATIVE ART FORM BUT FOR THAT, HIGH QUALITY ART AND SCRIPTS ARE NEEDED. THE KIND OF ART ONLY ARTISTS LIKE YOU CAN PROVIDE.

SINCERELY,

MIGUEL DOMINGUEZ
NEW YORK, NY

YOU MAKE SOME GOOD POINTS THAT ARE HARD TO COUNTER. THE ARGUMENT AGAINST NUDITY WAS REDUCED TO A BUSINESS LEVEL. I HOPE I CAN REGAIN SOME OF THE COURAGE OF THE OLD DAYS.

NOW SOME COMMENTS ABOUT THE DARK PLANET VIDEO:

DEAR MR. CORBEN,

ABOUT YOUR VIDEO, I DID NOT EXPECT A MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR SPIELBERG FILM I THOUGHT IT WAS DOCTOR WHO-LIKE IN THAT ONE MUST NOT SCRUTINIZE THE SPECIAL EFFECTS, JUST FOLLOW THE STORY LINE. I THINK THE VIDEO WOULD HAVE BEEN MORE APPEALING WITH DIALOGUE. I FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO FOLLOW SOME PARTS. THE PART THAT I LIKED THE BEST WAS **RELIEF STATION**. I HAVE TO ASK, IS KAREN GILBERTSON WHO YOU MODELED YOUR BUXOM FEMALE CHARACTERS AFTER? WHEN I SAW HER IN THAT GLASS CASE, I THOUGHT, "HEY, THAT'S KATH! SOMEONE REALLY IS BUILT LIKE THAT!"

SINCERELY,

ED SPOHN
OLATHE, KS

DEAR RICHARD CORBEN:

AS AN ASIDE, LET ME SAY THAT I HAVE BEEN A FAN FOR MANY YEARS AND YOU HAVE YET TO FAIL AS AN ARTIST. I ESPECIALLY ENJOYED YOUR PREMIER VIDEO, **THE DARK PLANET**. I REALLY ENJOYED THE LOVECRAFTIAN ALLUSIONS. CORRECT ME IF I'M WRONG, BUT THE BRUCE JONES FEATURE REMINDS ME OF A STORY HE DID FOR **CREEPY** MAGAZINE. I THINK THAT MOST PEOPLE WILL ENJOY THIS VIDEO, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO HAVE REALLY FOLLOWED THE WORK OF THE PEOPLE IN THE FILM. I'VE CAUGHT SEVERAL THINGS IN THE VIDEO BECAUSE I HAVE FOLLOWED YOUR CAREERS CAREFULLY

A **REAL** FAN.

OCTAVIO RAMOS JR.
ALBUQUERQUE, NM

AN EARLIER VERSION HAD NARRATION OVER BOTH PARTS OF THE PROJECT. RELIEF STATION WAS BASED ON A SHORT STRIP, WITHOUT WORDS, BRUCE CONTRIBUTED TO SOME FANZINE YEARS AGO. HE CHALLENGED ME TO MAKE THE VIDEO WORK ALSO WITHOUT WORDS. THE RESULT IS THAT VIEWERS WITH IMPAIRED HEARING CAN UNDERSTAND THE PROGRAM AS MUCH (OR AS LITTLE) AS ANYONE ELSE.

DEAR RICHARD,

ALL I CAN SAY IS THAT WITH **DEN 8** AND **9**, YOU'VE REALLY KICKED INTO HIGH GEAR THE COLORING IN THE LEAD STORY SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN REVITALIZED, AS IF YOU'VE SWITCHED BACK TO THE OLD OVERLAY SYSTEM. THE CHARACTERS SEEM TO LIVE AND BREATHE, AS THEY USED TO. I ALSO LIKE THE IDEA OF SHORTENING THE **DEN** STORY IN FAVOR OF A BRAND NEW CORBEN/STRNAD TALE (I CAN'T WAIT FOR **SON OF MUTANT WORLD**. I'M GLAD YOU DECIDED TO RESURRECT GOOD OLE DIMENTO - HE KICKS DEN'S BUTT ANY DAY.) AND KEEP NINO! THE ART IN **THE DRINKERS OF DUST** WAS PHENOMENAL! AND LEAST I FORGET - THE BUNIAK PIECE WAS A RIOT! IT WOULD BE GREAT IF YOU COULD ADD MORE HUMOR TO YOUR COMICS (**DEN #3** IS A GREAT EXAMPLE - INTELLIGENT HUMOR, GREAT CHARACTERIZATIONS - IT'S BY FAR MY FAVORITE INSTALLMENT IN THE **DEN** TALE). I TEND TO ENJOY YOUR ART BETTER WHEN YOU'RE ILLUSTRATING ATMOSPHERIC, HUMOROUS CHARACTER PIECES THAN STRAIGHT-AHEAD ACTION.

AS FOR **THE DARK PLANET** VIDEO: **RELIEF STATION** WAS QUITE INTERESTING. THE ATMOSPHERE OF AN IMPRESSIONISTIC FOREIGN FILM PERMEATED THROUGHOUT; IT WAS MOODY, BIZARRE, AND SUITABLY DEPRESSING. NINETY-NINE PERCENT OF THE SPECIAL EFFECTS WERE QUITE EFFECTIVE CONSIDERING THE BUDGET (ESPECIALLY THE RAIN SCENE AND THE SHIP-TRAILING VAPOR AS IT FLIES ABOVE THE STATION), AND, TO BE HONEST, I WAS FASCINATED. AS FOR **TOWER OF BLOOD** - WELL, PERHAPS YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TRIED SOMETHING SO AMBITIOUS AND TECHNICALLY DEMANDING ON SUCH A LOW BUDGET. THE NON-EXISTENCE OF SUITABLE SETS AND FEASIBLE SPECIAL EFFECTS RESTRICTED THE DIRECTION AND THUS CAUSED CONFUSION (MAYBE DIALOGUE WOULD HAVE HELPED). EVEN MOST MILLION DOLLAR HOLLYWOOD FILMS ABOUT GIANT MONSTERS FAIL TO CONVINCE. IT'S A DIFFICULT THING TO PULL OFF. A FEW SCENES WERE FUN, HOWEVER, (THE HEAD SMASHING, THE DECAY OF THE ALIEN'S FACE AND A FEW STUNNING LANDSCAPE SCENES COME TO MIND) BUT ALL IN ALL, IT WAS RATHER INCOMPREHENSIBLE. PERHAPS YOU SHOULD HAVE INCLUDED **NEVERWHERE** INSTEAD. BY THE WAY, LOVED THOSE DRIPPING FANTAGOR LETTERS.
AT ANY RATE, CONGRATULATIONS. YOU ARE THE ONLY SELF-PUBLISHER WHO HAS BRANCHED OUT INTO OTHER AREAS BESIDES COMICS. ANYONE WHO CAN'T APPRECIATE THAT - SCREW 'EM. I'M GLAD YOU SHARED YOUR FILMS WITH US.

BEST,

MARC GAYAN
MCDONALD, OH

THANKS MARC. YEAH, I GUESS I'M ALWAYS TRYING SOMETHING TOO AMBITIOUS FOR MY LIMITATIONS.

DEAR MR CORBEN,

FIRST, KUDOS ON **DEN #9**. WHAT A WONDERFUL VARIETY OF EXCELLENT ARTWORK. EACH OF THE THREE STORIES DRAWN BY YOU IS UNIQUE. IS THAT COLORED PENCIL I SEE IN **STRANGE NATIVITY**? I'VE ALWAYS LIKED **TO MEET THE FACES YOU MEET** WHAT A TREAT TO SEE IT DONE IN COLOR NINO'S WORK IS GREAT TOO AND COMPLIMENTS YOURS.

NOW, ABOUT **THE DARK PLANET** VIDEO. I HAVE A COPY WHICH I TREASURE BECAUSE YOU ARE MY FAVORITE ARTIST. SOMEHOW YOU HAVE MANAGED TO TRANSFER THE LOOK, THE CHARACTERS, THE COLORS, THE LIGHTING AND SOME PLOT ELEMENTS OF YOUR DRAWN ARTWORK ONTO THE MOVING SCREEN. THIS IS NO EASY TASK. I KNOW BECAUSE I'VE SPENT YEARS DRAWING IN ADDITION TO FILMING, INCLUDING STOP-MOTION CLAY. IT'S DISCONCERTING TO WORK SO HARD ON YOUR VIDEO AND GET THE CRITICISM YOU DID IN YOUR LETTERS COLUMN.

WOULD YOU MIND IF I GAVE YOU SOME CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM? THE MAIN PROBLEM I SEE WITH **THE DARK PLANET** IS THE EXTRA TIME YOU TAKE TO TELL THE STORIES. YOU COULD CUT THE LENGTH IN HALF, ESPECIALLY WITH THE FIRST STORY, AND YOU WOULD INCREASE THE VIEWER'S INTEREST. SHOW LESS OF THE "COVER" MONSTER, SHOOT IT IN SLOW MOTION AND FROM A LOWER ANGLE TO MAKE IT SEEM LESS LIKE A TABLETOP PUPPET. YOUR LIVE ACTORS SEEM A LITTLE STIFF EXAGGERATE THEIR MOVEMENTS MORE AND VARY SHOTS OF THEM MORE (CLOSE, MEDIUM, LONG, DIFFERENT ANGLES) AS YOU DO SO WONDERFULLY IN YOUR DRAWN PAGES. WHEN IN DOUBT ABOUT THE LENGTH OF EACH SCENE, SHORTEN IT, EVEN IF IT PERSONALLY HURTS YOU TO DO SO. IT'S BETTER TO ENCOURAGE REPEAT VIEWINGS OF THE VIDEO THAN TO HAVE SHOTS THAT ARE TOO LONG. IN THE SAME SENSE, IT MUST BE HARD TO THINK THAT A DRAWN PAGE YOU SPENT DAYS WORKING ON GETS READ IN LESS THAN A MINUTE (BUT WE LOVE TO READ THEM OVER).

PLEASE DON'T GET DISCOURAGED BY NEGATIVE RESPONSES TO **THE DARK PLANET**. YOU ARE TO BE COMMENDED FOR WORKING IN THAT DIFFICULT MEDIUM AND FOR PRODUCING SOMETHING SO DISTINCTLY IN YOUR STYLE. YOUR FANS APPRECIATE YOUR EXPLORING NEW TECHNIQUES, WHILE MAINTAINING VISUAL EXCELLENCE.

LARRY BEHNKE
HIGH SPRINGS, FL

THAT'S GOOD ADVICE LARRY AND I APPRECIATE YOUR THOUGHTFUL ANALYSIS.

DEAR SIR

I AM SORRY TO SAY THIS VIDEO WAS NOT WHAT I HAD EXPECTED. BUT, WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO SEE IS SOMETHING LIKE THE WORK YOU HAD DONE IN THE **HEAVY METAL** MOVIE WITH YOUR CHARACTER, **DEN**.

I HOPE YOU WILL CONSIDER DOING A FULL LENGTH ANIMATED FEATURE OF YOUR CHARACTER **DEN**. I WOULD BE MOST INTERESTED IN SOMETHING ALONG THOSE LINES.

SINCERELY,

LOU CANNATA
SYRACUSE, NY

DEAR RICHARD,

I REGRET TO SAY I DIDN'T REALLY ENJOY **THE DARK PLANET**. I LIKED A COUPLE OF SCENES. THE VIOLENCE DID NOT BOTHER ME, BUT I FELT THE WHOLE TIME I NEEDED SOMETHING OF A POINT OF REFERENCE TO RELATE TO. I DIDN'T RELATE TO ANY OF THE CHARACTERS; IT SEEMED TO BE LIKE A DREAM THAT WENT ON AND ON, NOT REALLY SATISFYING. I GUESS I HAD ANTICIPATED AN ALL ANIMATED MOVIE. NOT TO COMPARE YOUR WORK WITH OTHERS BUT I HAD HOPED FOR SOMETHING LIKE **HEAVY METAL** OR **FIRE AND ICE** BY FRANK. ANYWAY, I WAS GLAD TO SEE WHERE SOME OF YOUR WORK HAS BEEN AND STILL ANTICIPATE WITH EAGERNESS TO SEE MORE.

THANKS,

RALPH VASSEUR
SEATTLE, WA

DESPITE THE GENERAL ASSUMPTION ABOUT MY ART IN HEAVY METAL THE MOVIE, THE ONLY DRAWINGS I DID FOR IT WAS A COUPLE OF UNUSED MODEL SHEETS. A LITTLE MATH WILL SHOW WHY I'M NOT GOING TO DO AN ANIMATED CARTOON FEATURE. 12 TO 24 DRAWINGS PER SECOND; 720 PER MINUTE; 64,800 TO 129,600 DRAWINGS FOR A 90 MINUTE FEATURE. ALSO, EVEN THE BEST ANIMATION IS NOT AS SMOOTH NOR AS LIFE-LIKE AS LIVE ACTION. I LIKE TO WATCH THE STYLIZED WORLDS MADE POSSIBLE BY TALENTED ANIMATORS, IT'S JUST NOT THE WORK FOR ME.

RALPH, ALTHOUGH YOU DIDN'T MEAN IT AS A COMPLIMENT, I LIKE YOUR COMPARISON OF THE TAPE TO A DREAM. THE CREATION OF SUSTAINED MOOD IS AN IMPORTANT GOAL IN MY FILMMAKING. I HOPE YOU LIKE THE NEXT ONE.

THERE'S NO AD FOR THE DARK PLANET VIDEO THIS TIME BECAUSE WE'RE SOLD OUT. HOWEVER, WE DO HAVE A LIMITED NUMBER OF TAPES VIEWED ONLY ONCE. WRITE OR CALL FOR DETAILS.

THIS ENDS THE **DEN** SERIES FOR NOW. BUT BEGINNING IN **APRIL** 1990, WATCH FOR **SON OF MUTANT WORLD**. IT WILL BE A FIVE ISSUE SERIES AND YOU CAN SUBSCRIBE NOW! $8 POSTPAID FOR ALL FIVE.

IN THE MEANTIME, CORBEN STUDIOS WILL PRODUCE A SPECIAL PROJECT FOR **MIRAGE STUDIOS**. I GUESS YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS. BYE FOR NOW.

RICHARD & Dona

Letters Page from *Den* #10 (Fantagor Press), Page 2

COVER GALLERY

Cover of *Children of Fire* #2, 1988

Cover of *Den* #8, 1989

Cover of *Den* #9, 1989

Cover of *Den* #10, 1989

ORIGINAL GRAYSCALE ART GALLERY

Children of Fire #2, Page 1

COF 15

COF 16

COF 17

Cover to *Grim Wit* #2, First Appearance in Print of Den (1972)

INTRODUCTION TO *GRIM WIT* #2.

JOSÉ VILLARRUBIA

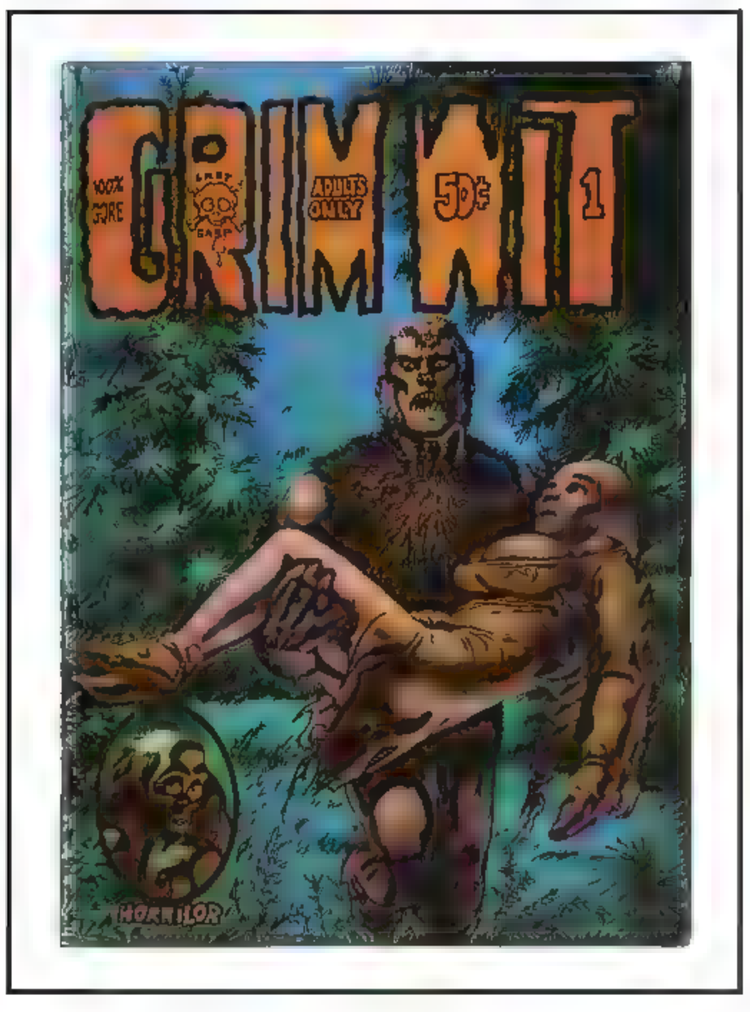
The underground comix series *Grim Wit* lasted just two issues, but both are important entries to Richard Corben's bibliography. The first one, published in June of 1972 by Rip Off Press, was 100% Corben. It featured a color cover for one of the stories included in it, "The Beast of Wolfton." It is a humorous medieval werewolf legend that was conceived as part of a triptych with Corben's previous "weredog" tale *Rowlf*. The issue also includes the third and final installment of one of Corben's earliest hapless heroes, Razar, titled "Necromancer."

Issue two, published in September by Last Gasp Eco-Funnies, featured a picture of Den for the first time on a cover. In it, he's having a naked picnic with an unknown woman while a dragon lurks above him. This visual gag is not in any way an image from any of his stories or even his world, but it's certainly eye-catching. This issue of the publication was in color for the first time, and inside Corben presented two stories: the first installment of Den (titled simply "Den") and a humorous tale penned by Doug Moench, "Damsel in Dragon Dress." This last one featured traditional hand coloring over black line art. But "Den" was instead colored using Corben's unique hand-drawn color separations. And inspired by EC Comics, Corben created a hostess for these short stories in Grim Wit, a busty woman with a skull-like face named Horrilor. This "Den" is a loose sequel to the short film *Neverwhere* that Corben had made four years earlier. Printing the handmade color separations on newsprint proved to be not ideal since the colors became duller and the artwork less sharp. But it caught the attention of French publisher Les Humanoïdes Associés, founded by creators Moebius, Druillet, and Dionnet. They reprinted "Den" in an expanded version, this time on slick paper, in their pioneering magazine *Metal hurlant*, issues three and four. Completely changing his art style, Corben also produced the following two chapters of the story for the French anthology, and it was later continued in its American counterpart, *Heavy Metal*.

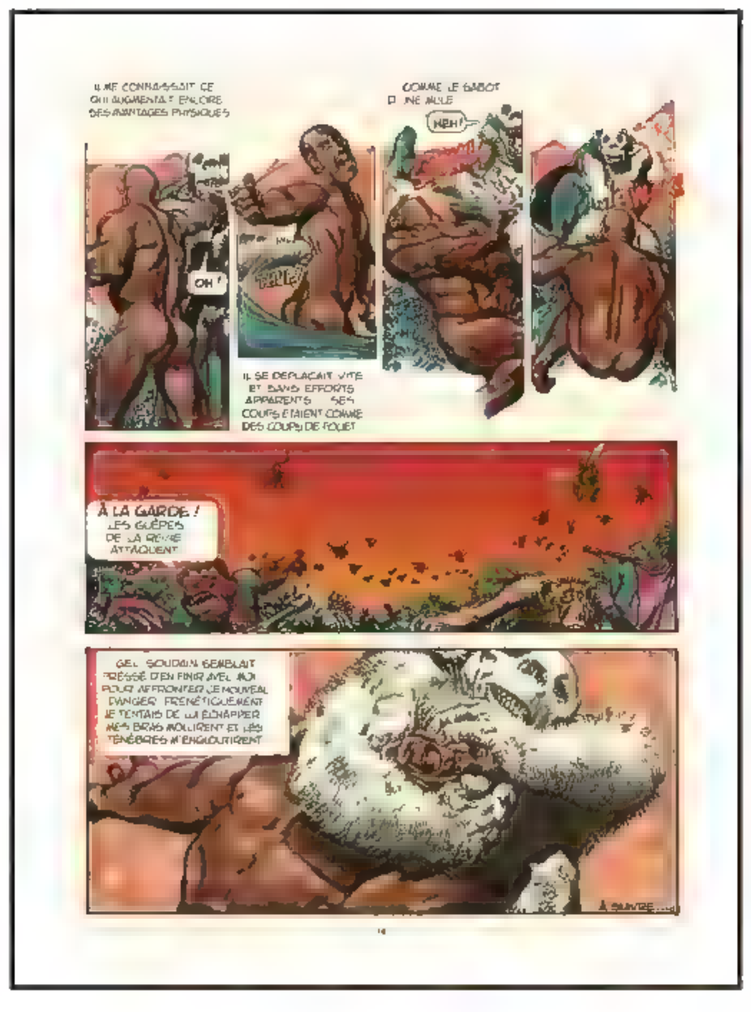
Corben's storytelling exploded in this first chapter of *Den*. His tilted panoramic 180° in single panels, glorious double-page spread, and surprise 16-panel grid for the fight scene are things that he never repeated. What we are presenting in the following pages is a restored version of how the story looked on newsprint, aiming to recreate the initial feeling of how readers first experienced the character.

Enjoy!

José Villarrubia



Cover of the second edition (by Last Gasp Eco-Funnies) of the premiere issue of *Grim Wit*, featuring the first appearance of Horrilor.



Metal hurlant issue 6, page 66. This was the first publication to print *Den* on quality paper. Although it says here "to be continued" ("*A suivre*"), the serial was discontinued after this issue.

DOD

IT SEEMS I WAS FLOATING IN DARKNESS FOR AN EXTREMELY LONG TIME, SLOWLY JUMBLED CLOUDS OF ELECTRO-NEURAL IMPULSES COALESCED TO FORM MY MIND AND I BECAME AWARE OF MYSELF AS AN ENTITY. I DRIFTED ACROSS NEBULOUS UNFOCUSED COLORS.

AS I WANDERED THROUGH THE MAZE, I SAW SOMETHING. IT WAS AN IMAGE... A MEMORY, BUT IT WAS SO FUZZY AND INDISTINCT. IT SEEMED AS THOUGH I WAS LOOKING AT A BOOK... WHAT IS A BOOK?

WITHIN THE BOOK WAS AN UNCONNECTED PAGE. IT HAD SOMETHING ON IT... AN INCOMPREHENSIBLE LABYRINTH OF LINES. THE IMAGES FADED, SWEPT AWAY BY A SEARING LIGHT. OTHER SENSATIONS ACCOMPANIED THE RADIANCE, BOMBARDING MY EMERGING CONSCIOUSNESS.

WHO WAS I? WHERE WAS I?... THE LANDSCAPE WAS TOTALLY UNKNOWN TO ME; EVEN MY BODY WAS UNFAMILIAR.

WHAT FORCES BROUGHT ME HERE? I SEARCHED MY MIND FOR MEMORIES... THERE WAS SOMETHING THERE, BUT IT WAS TOO CLOUDED... A NAME... D... E... N... MY NAME IS DEN.

I SCANNED THE HORIZON. A DISTANT STRUCTURE ROSE OUT OF THE MISTS. I DECIDED TO GO THERE. PERHAPS IT HELD A CLUE TO THE MYSTERY.

I WALKED. MY BARE FOOTFALLS IN THE SAND CREATED THE ONLY SOUND. A SLIGHT BREEZE WAS A SMALL RELIEF IN THE HEAT.

AFTER SEVERAL HOURS ... I WAS OVERTAKEN — FOOD!!
EXISTENCE IN THIS BY A VACUOUS FEELING
DESOLATE LAND.. ... HUNGER.

THERE WERE INSTINCTS, REFLEXES AND A GOOD AMOUNT OF MUSCULAR DEXTERITY CONTAINED IN THIS BODY IN WHICH I FOUND MYSELF. I WAS THANKFUL BUT STILL CONFUSED.

AS EVENING APPROACHED I CAME UPON AN ENIGMATIC OASIS WITH A FOUNTAIN. I PONDERED THE ARTISANS IDENTITY. I WAS HAPPY TO DRINK THE SWEET WATER WITHOUT PAUSE. THE ABUNDANT FRUITS WERE ALSO DELICIOUS.

AFTER FURTHER REFRESHING MYSELF, I THOUGHT TO FIND A PLACE TO SLEEP. APPREHENSIVE OF PREDACIOUS CREATURES THAT MIGHT HABIT THE FOUNTAIN, I LEFT ITS IMMEDIATE VICINITY AND FOUND A PROTECTED SPOT NEARBY.

NEAR MORNING DREAMS CAME TO ME. THERE WAS A PERSON, AND THE BOOK OF MY FORMER VISION. THE SURROUNDINGS WERE STRANGELY FAMILIAR.

THE MANS ATTENTION WAS WHOLLY UPON READING AND WAS SURPRISED BY THE DISCOVERY OF THE LOOSE PAPER. THEN THE SCENE CHANGED. THE MAN MANIPULATED MINIATURE STRUCTURES INTO AN INCOMPREHENSIBLE ASSEMBLY. I AWOKE WITH AN OVERWHELMING ANXIETY.

A CREATURE, THE LIKES OF WHICH I'D NEVER SEEN BEFORE, WAS DRINKING FROM THE POOL.

I WAS FROZEN WITH FEAR. COULD IT HEAR MY POUNDING HEART? COULD IT FIND ME FROM MY SCENT? COULD IT SENSE MY PRESENCE BY SOME UNKNOWN FACULTY?

APPARENTLY QUENCHED, THE LIZARDMAN LEFT AND DISAPPEARED AMONG THE ROCKS. I WAS ABOUT TO DESCEND FOR A DRINK WHEN—

CHA CHING CHA CHING CHA CHING CHA CHING

ANOTHER FIGURE APPROACHED.

THE ORNAMENTED HEADDRESS AND ANKLETS EXUDED THE SOUND THAT ALERTED ME.

I CONCLUDED THAT IT WAS AN INDIAN GIRL, WHICH GAVE ME NEW THOUGHTS ABOUT MY LOCATION. SHE DRANK AND LEPT.

CHA CHING CHA CHING CHA CHING CHA CHING CHA CHING CHA CHING CHA CHING CHA CHING CHA CHING

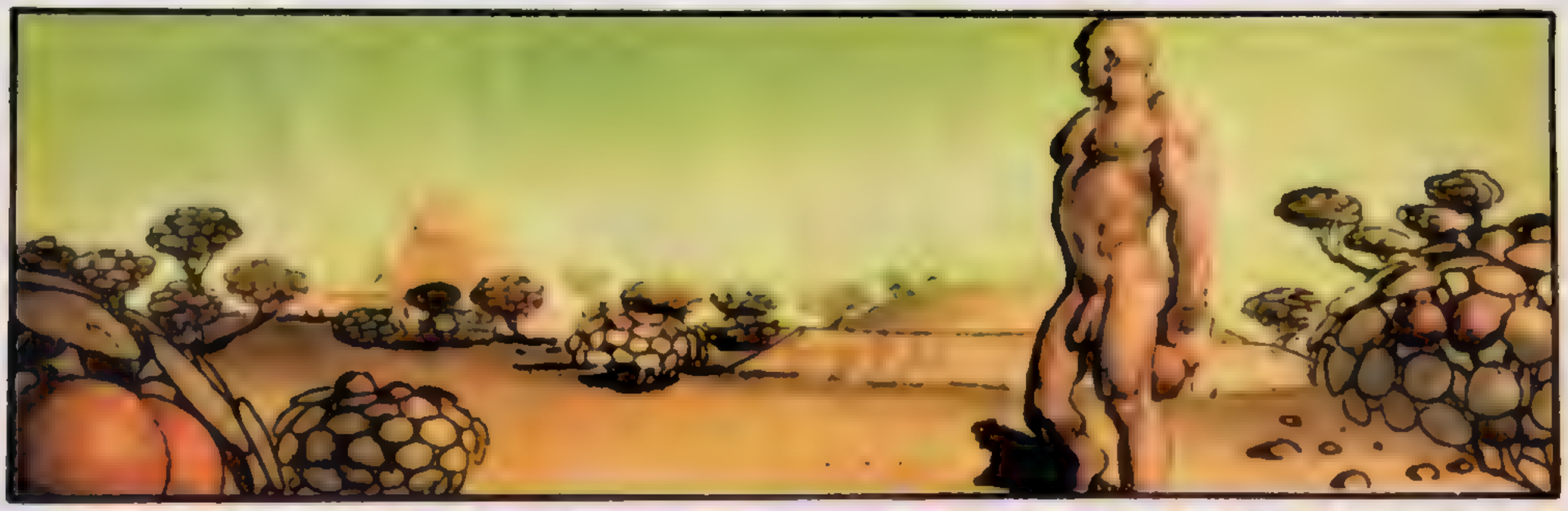
THE GIRL TRAVELED TOWARD THE EDIFICE. IT WAS MY QUEST ALSO, THOUGH I HAD NO PREDETERMINED PURPOSE THERE.

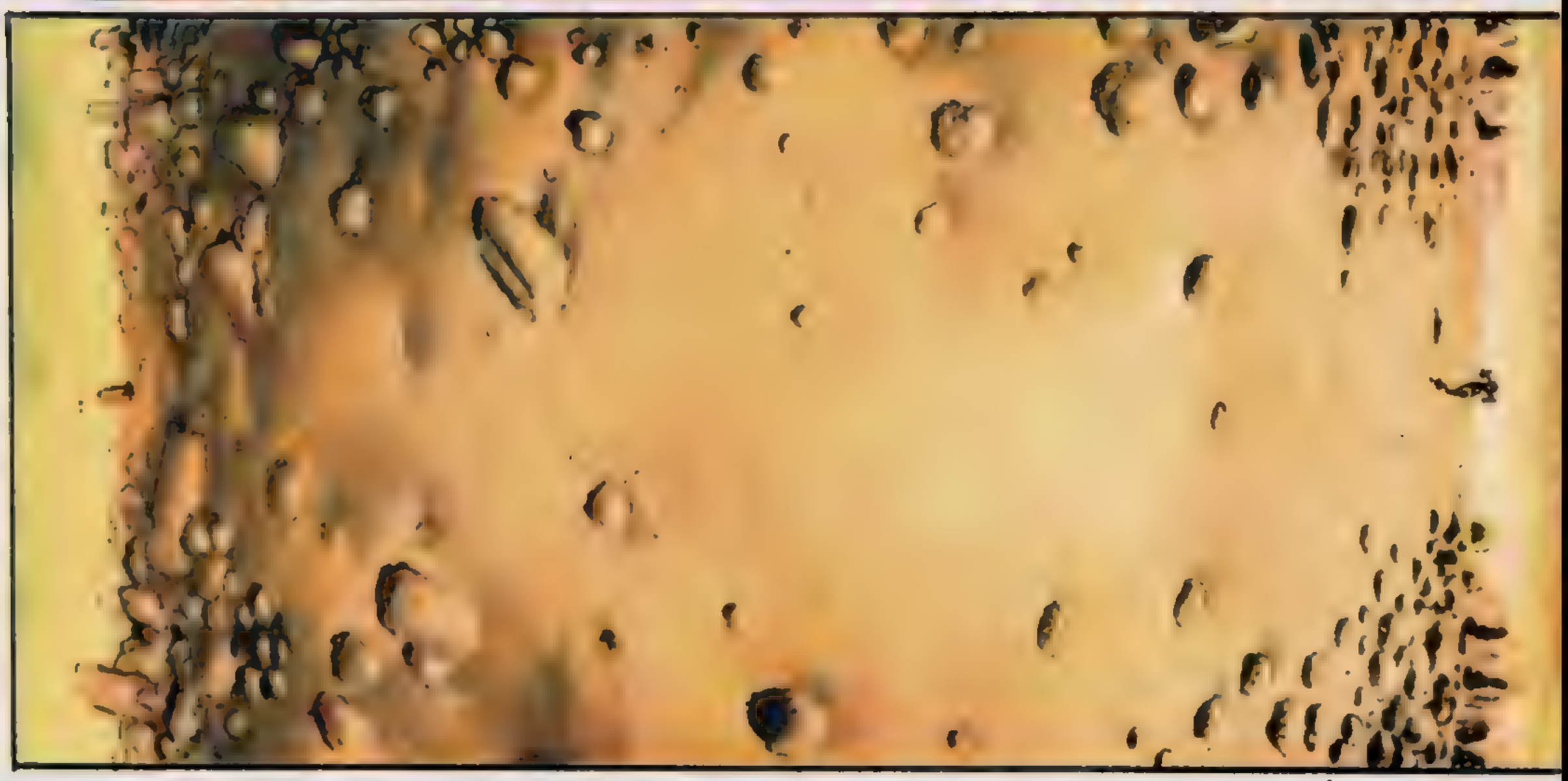
I ATE

DRANK...

AND FOLLOWED HER.

I STUDIED THE ARTIFACT AS I PASSED. I CONJECTURED THAT IT HOUSED MACHINERY THAT DREW WATER FROM ROCKS OR THE DEPTHS OF THE EARTH (IF THIS REALLY WAS EARTH). AND WAS POWERED BY SOLAR RAYS OR NUCLEAR ENERGY.





THIS WAS THE ONLY HUMAN I'D SEEN SINCE I HAD AWAKENED HERE. PERHAPS I SHOULD'VE CONFRONTED HER AND TRIED COMMUNICATION. AN OMINOUS AURA ABOUT HER DISCOURAGED THAT PLAN. IT WAS THE **SOUND!!** WHY WOULD A SANE PERSON TRAVEL IN THIS HOSTILE LAND WEARING NOISY ORNAMENTS WHICH COULD ATTRACT CARNIVOROUS BEASTS. I CIRCLED AHEAD TO WATCH HER PASS.

THE IMAGES STIRRED PHANTASMIC FORCES IN MY HEAD AND EROTIC ONES IN MY BODY.

SURPRISED AT MY OWN REACTION, I SAT MOTIONLESS, WONDERING ABOUT WHAT HAD CAUSED IT AND WHAT TO DO NEXT, WHEN A SHADOW CROSSED ME.

IT WAS THE LIZARDMAN I HAD SEEN EARLIER. WAS IT A COINCIDENCE THAT HE TRAVELED IN THIS SAME DIRECTION? ... I REJECTED THIS THOUGHT. HE SEEMED INTENT UPON SOMETHING ... THE GIRL... I WAS SUDDENLY AFRAID, NOT FOR MYSELF, BUT FOR HER EVEN THOUGH I DIDN'T KNOW HER.

DISPITE MY LACK OF A STRATEGY, I RESOLVED TO PREVENT THIS BEAST FROM HARMING THE INDIANESS.

I FOLLOWED THE LIZARDMAN, WHO FOLLOWED THE GIRL, WHOSE DESTINATION WAS APPARENTLY THE ARCHITECTURAL ANOMALY, BUT HER PURPOSE THERE WAS STILL A COMPLETE MYSTERY.

THE BEASTS INTENTIONS BECAME OBVIOUS AS WE ENTERED THE BUILDING COMPLEX. I RUSHED TO HIDE AMONG THE SCULPTURES ALONG THE STAIR CASE BETWEEN THEM.

THE PREDATOR HISSED AN EXPECTANT CHUCKLE.

FRANTICLY I SEARCHED FOR A WEAPON.

THE GIRL TURNED AND SAW THE LIZARD BUT DIDN'T SEEM FRIGHTENED.

I CHARGED !!!

YAAAAAAAA!

THUNK

THE STONE STRUCK THE BEAST.

WHUP

I CRASHED INTO HIM, GRABBING FOR HIS KNIFE,..

CLATTER

BUT SUCCEEDED ONLY IN KNOCKING IT AWAY.

THE BLOW SHOULD'VE KILLED HIM. HE WAS HARDLY STUNNED.

UURRWWOOLLLLL

I DION'T WANT TO GIVE HIM A CHANCE TO THINK.

BUMP

THE GIRL REMAINED, WATCHING.

WHOP

KRAK

EEYAAWHN

MY BODY MADE MOVEMENTS UNFAMILIAR TO MY CONSCIOUS MIND IT WAS THOUGH IT HAD BEEN HIGHLY TRAINED AND WAS UNDER THE CONTROL OF ANOTHER PART OF MY BRAIN.

BUMP

BOK

THE LIZARDS STRONGEST BLOW CAUGHT ME UNPREPARED. I GUESS I THOUGHT HE WAS GOING TO CLOSE IN AND GRAB ME AGAIN. UNCONSCIOUS I WAS THROWN AMONG THE STONE WORKS AND FELL BELOW THE STAIR CASE.

THEN IT CAME TO ME. MY NAME IS... WAS DAVID ELLIS NORMAN. I WAS MOURNING MY UNCLE DANIELS DEATH. THEY HAD NEVER FOUND HIM BUT NOW, AFTER SEVEN YEARS IT WAS LEGAL. SOME OF HIS BELONGINGS HAD COME INTO MY POSSESSION INCLUDING HIS COLLECTION OF BURROUGHS FANTASY NOVELS. IN THE BACK OF ONE WAS A PIECE OF PAPER WITH AN ELECTRONIC SCHEMATIC DRAWN ON IT...

THERE WAS ALSO A LETTER... ADDRESSED TO ME.

Dear David,
I foresee you reading this some years after my disappearance. It is because we shared so many interests and a kinship that went beyond our common blood, that I write. I may be dead as you read, I have no way of knowing what lies ahead for me in that other world. This much is certain: my dances are better there, despite the dangers, than here, facing certain slow death. You weren't aware of my withering illness. I am slowly losing life; it begins in the limbs and crawls slowly, relentlessly, to finish in the heart. So I bid you farewell and leave while I have the strength and resolution.

Goodbye,
Dan

I KNEW THE SCHEMATIC WAS A CLUE. I DECIDED TO BUILD IT.

COLLECTING THE PARTS REQUIRED WAS NOT WITHOUT DIFFICULTY. SOME WERE EXOTIC SPECIAL ORDER ITEMS; OTHERS HAD BECOME OBSOLETE. BUT MOST WERE READILY AVAILABLE RESISTERS, CAPACITORS, DIODES, TRANSISTORS, ETC. FINALLY I COMMENCED WORK ON THE CONTRAPTION.

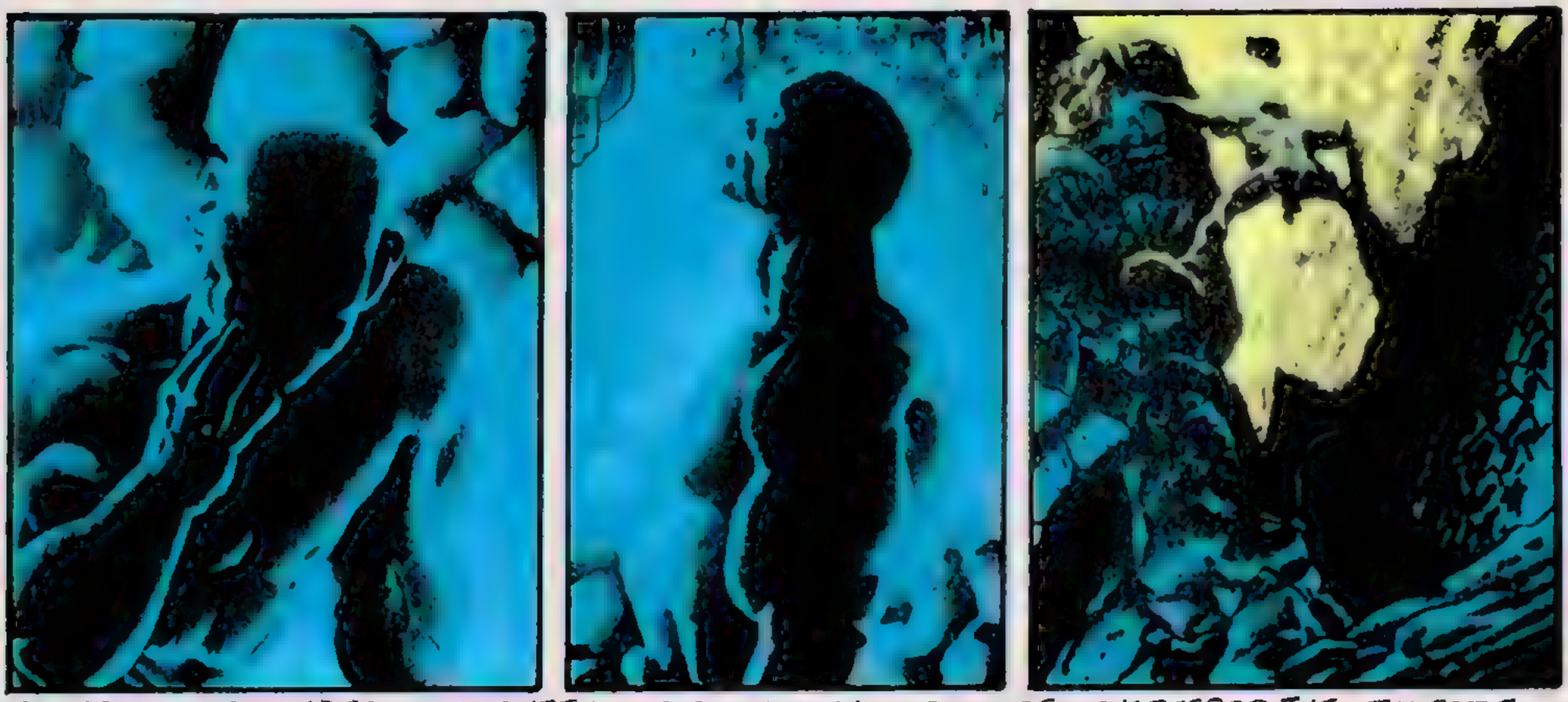
WHEN IT WAS COMPLETE, I WAS STILL PUZZLED. WHAT DID IT DO? I FELT SURE THAT IT WAS A CLUE TO MY UNCLES DISAPPEARANCE. FOR FEAR THE THING MIGHT EXPLODE WHEN I TURNED IT ON, ALSO TO ESCAPE DERISIVE COMMENTS OF FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS, I TOOK THE DEVICE TO AN ABANDONED FARM AREA TO TRY IT OUT.

AN ELECTRICAL FIELD WAS CREATED. IT WAS A GATEWAY... INTO ANOTHER UNIVERSE. I DON'T KNOW HOW THE DIAGRAM CAME INTO MY UNCLES HANDS BUT HE HAD BUILT A MACHINE LIKE THIS ONE AND ENTERED INTO... WHERE?...NEVER WILL I COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND WHAT HAS HAPPENED.

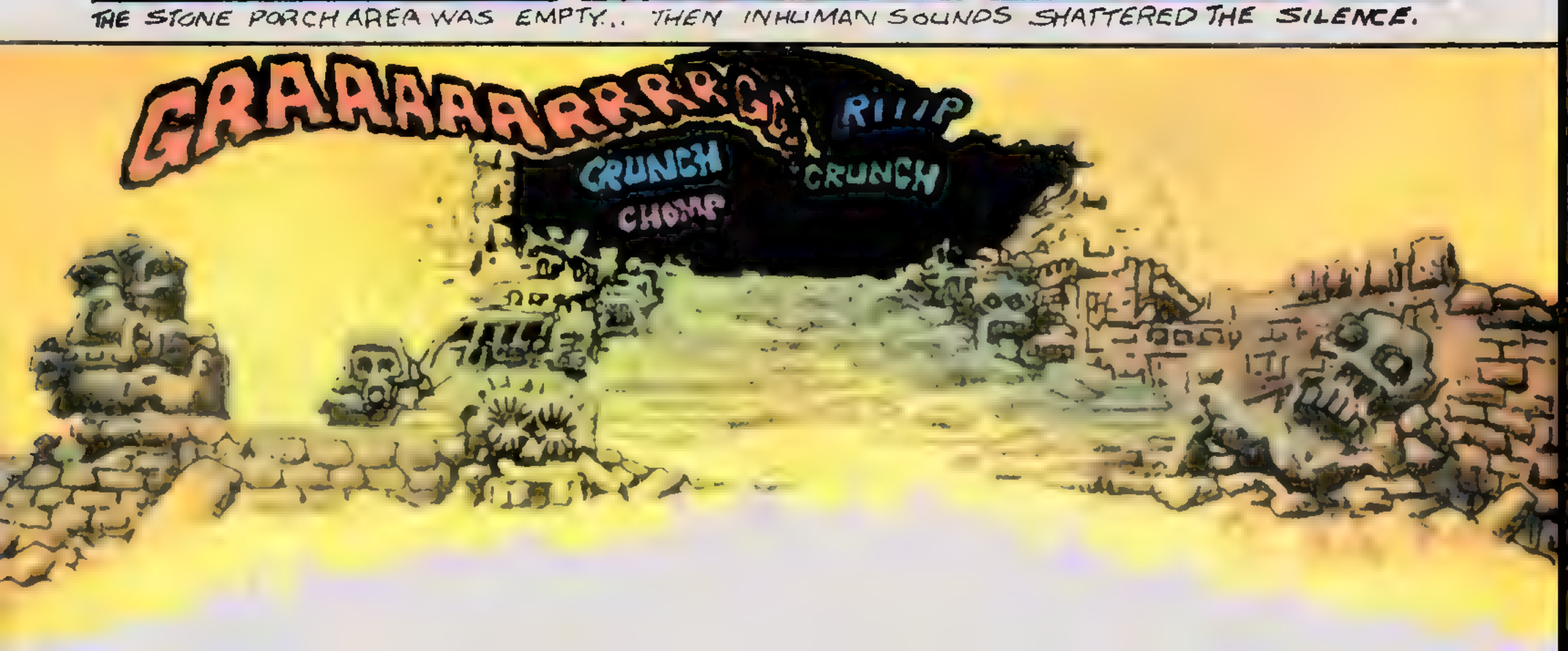
I HAD TO FIND MY UNCLE. I STEPPED INTO THE SWIRLING LIGHT... AND LOST CONSCIOUSNESS.

I REAWAKENED AMONG DECAYED STONEWORK. I HAD NOT FOUND MY UNCLE BUT THERE WERE MORE URGENT MATTERS AT HAND.

I PEARED OUT EXPECTING TO SEE THE GIRL OR THE LIZARDMAN.

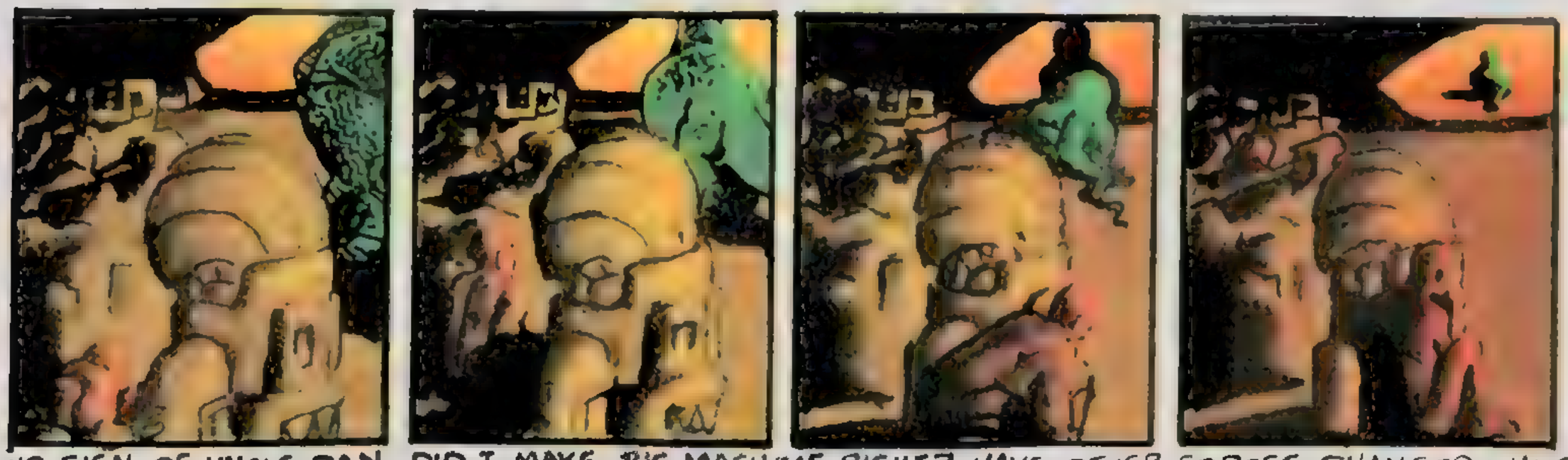


THE STONE PORCH AREA WAS EMPTY... THEN INHUMAN SOUNDS SHATTERED THE SILENCE.



I WAS ILL PREPARED FOR THE SIGHT THAT FOLLOWED.

A DRAGON AND THE INDIAN GIRL. THEY WERE FRIENDS AND CHEWING ON THE LIZARD MANS CARCASS. IT WAS A SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP; SHE LURED THE PREY, THE DRAGON DID THE BLOODY WORK.

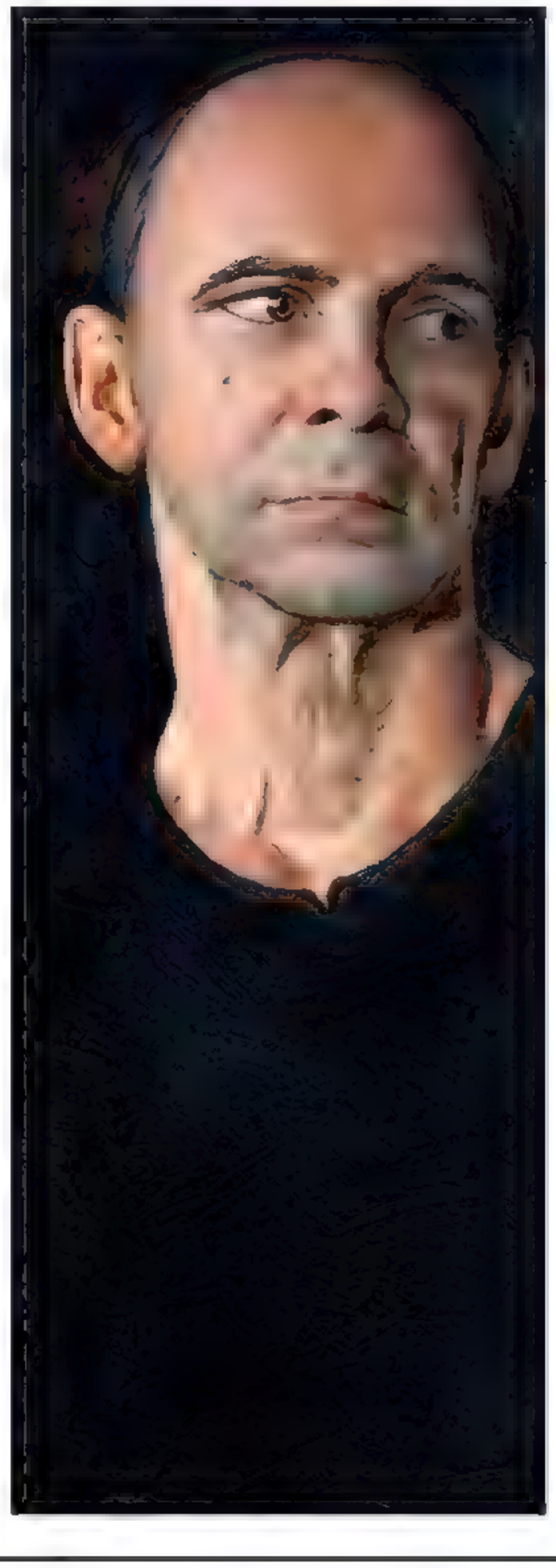


NO SIGN OF UNCLE DAN. DID I MAKE THE MACHINE RIGHT? HAVE OTHER FORCES CHANGED SINCE HE MADE HIS MACHINE?... WILL I EVER GET BACK?... DO I **WANT** TO RETURN? I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO LOOK AROUND AND SEE...

THE END

Richard Corben was born in Missouri and grew up in Sunflower, Kansas, a community that worked for the Sunflower Ordnance Works, an army plant that manufactured bombs in World War II.

Corben drew comics all of his life. An early effort was a series of comics about the adventures of TRAIL, the family dog. Later, he created imitations of Tarzan and Brothers of the Spear. He also showed a keen interest in animation by turning many pads of paper into animated flipbooks.



While attending the Kansas City Art Institute, he concentrated on basic drawing and painting, developing skills that would become vital in creating his chosen realistic style. At that time, his college offered no courses for animation, but by using his father's 8 mm movie camera, Corben nevertheless produced a 5-minute animated film highlighting the labors of Heracles as his senior project.

After graduation, Corben wanted to go to New York to launch a career in comics or animation, but he was shy and timid, and put off such a drastic move. After working in construction for his father for a while, he found a local job as an artist/animator/cameraman in a Kansas City industrial film company. During this time, despite his shyness, he found a girl to marry him.

After nearly ten years at the film company, Corben felt frustrated that he really hadn't given his art career a chance. He started drawing so-called "underground" comix and fanzines at night after working a full-time job during the day. About this same time, Warren Publishing Company began a series of black-and-white horror comics, CREEPY, EERIE, and VAMPIRELLA. This was a perfect match for Corben's interests, and he drew several stories for CREEPY on speculation. Unfortunately, none of these were accepted. But the "wannabe" comic book artist persisted and even met James Warren at a science fiction convention. Finally, Warren and his editor, Bill Dubay, relented and started sending Corben scripts to draw. At last, a foothold was established in his comic career. Even with the responsibilities of a wife, a daughter and a mortgage, the young artist now felt confident enough to quit his full-time job at the industrial film company and devote all his time to drawing.

The underground comix surge spread to Europe, and requests to reprint Corben underground features began to appear. His fantasy character, DEN, was created for the American underground comic, GRIM WIT; DEN was next printed in the French METAL HURLANT, and then printed in the American HEAVY METAL. During this era, Richard and Dona started FANTAGOR PRESS, a publishing company featuring Richard's comics. Unfortunately, the business wasn't enough to support them. Next, Corben began drawing for American comics—D.C., MARVEL, DARK HORSE, and others.

Corben believed that maintaining drawing skills required constant practice. He regularly attended life drawing classes all throughout his career. He found the activity both an ongoing challenge and a source of pleasure.

His love and interest in animation continued throughout his lifetime and motivated him to create digitally animated movies he shared on his web site and Facebook page.

Richard was married for 56 years to Dona, and is the father of watercolor artist and comic book colorist, Beth. His life and love was devoted to his family and his art. He was a humble man and an extremely kind, good man.

Richard Corben died December 2, 2020.

VOLUME 3

CHILDREN OF FIRE

RICHARD CORBEN

RICHARD CORBEN'S MASTERPIECE AT LAST BACK IN PRINT AFTER DECADES!

Well-known for his legendary fantasy underground masterpieces published by *Fantagor Press* as well as *Heavy Metal*, Richard Corben's work has been recognized internationally having been awarded one of the most prestigious recognitions in comics literature—the Grand Prix at Angoulême—as well having been inducted into the Will Eisner Award Hall of Fame.

Aliens flee their planet after a monster attack and crash-land near a sorcerer's castle in Neverwhere. They must fight for survival and protect their egg and future kin at all costs from the many beasts, pirates, and other threats to their safety.

Den: Children of Fire is the third volume of the long out-of-print *Den* series by renowned creator Richard Corben, now being published as part of a Corben library of deluxe graphic novels by Dark Horse Comics. This special edition features the collected chapters of "Children of Fire," the art pages restored by long-time Corben collaborator José Villarrubia and relettered by Nate Piekos of Blambot, plus bonus material and an introduction by Matt Kindt, all presented in a gorgeous hardcover with a dust jacket.

"With a combination of air-brush, cameras, and acetate overlays, Corben created magic."
–MATT KINDT

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"THIS FAN... THIS MONSTER!"